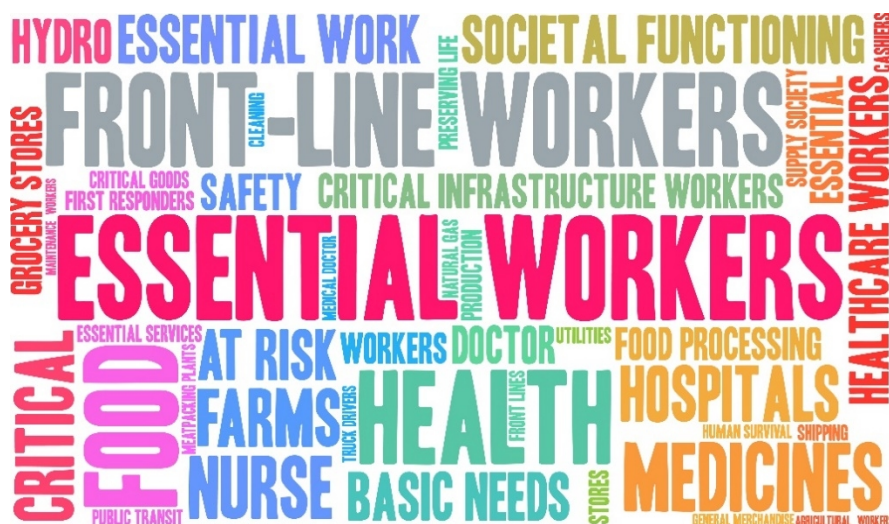


Revaluation of working conditions and wages for essential workers

Annex 3.5. - Country study on Romania



Revaluation of working conditions and wages for essential workers

Annex 3.5. - Country study on Romania

Abstract

This country case explores the situation of essential workers in Romania in the context of the COVID-19 emergency, with a focus on women and migrant workers in low-paid frontline occupations. The study first provides a definition of essential workers in this country, together with key socio-demographic characteristics. It then analyses, based on existing literature and selected stakeholder interviews, the main impacts of COVID-19 on working conditions. Finally, it illustrates key policy measures and agreements adopted in Romania to support essential workers and their personal and professional lives.

This document was provided by the Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies at the request of the committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL).

This document was requested by the European Parliament's committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL).

AUTHOR

Cristina VASILESCU, IRS, Italy

ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBLE

Helen HOFFMANN

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

Mina DRAGANSKA

Roberto BIANCHINI

LINGUISTIC VERSIONS

Original: EN

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Policy departments provide in-house and external expertise to support European Parliament committees and other parliamentary bodies in shaping legislation and exercising democratic scrutiny over EU internal policies.

To contact the Policy Department or to subscribe for email alert updates, please write to:

Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies

European Parliament

L-2929 - Luxembourg

Email: Poldep-Economy-Science@ep.europa.eu

Manuscript completed: November 2021

Date of publication: January 2022

© European Union, 2022

This document is available on the internet at:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses>

DISCLAIMER AND COPYRIGHT

The opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament.

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy.

For citation purposes, the publication should be referenced as: Vasilescu, C., 2022 *Revaluation of working conditions and wages for essential workers. Country study on Romania (Annex 3.5.)*, Publication for the committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies, European Parliament, Luxembourg.

© Cover image used under licence from Adobe Stock

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	4
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
1. NATIONAL DEFINITION, SHARE IN OVERALL EMPLOYMENT AND MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF ESSENTIAL WORKERS BEFORE COVID-19	8
2. MAIN IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF ESSENTIAL WORKERS	16
3. MAIN LEGISLATION, POLICIES, COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS AND EMPLOYERS' MEASURES ADOPTED IN THE COUNTRY TO SUPPORT ESSENTIAL WORKERS	20
CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY INDICATIONS	29
REFERENCES	32
ANNEXES	37
Annex I – Stakeholder Interviews	37
Annex II – Additional Tables	38
Annex III – Good Practice Fiche	48

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	Characteristics of workers in sectors including "essential" workers	12
Table 2:	Average monthly nominal gross earnings by economic activity at level of CANE Rev.2	38
Table 3:	Average monthly nominal gross earnings by economic activity at level of CANE Rev.2 and gender	39
Table 4:	Employment by activity of the national economy, by status in employment and by sex	41
Table 5:	Employment by activity of the national economy and by sex	46

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EUROSTAT	Statistical Office of the European Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
GEO	Government Emergency Ordinance
NPRR	National Plan for Recovery and Resilience
RON	Romanian New Leu currency
SARS-CoV-2	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SMURD	Mobile Emergency Service for Resuscitation and Extrication ("Serviciul Mobil de Urgență, Reanimare și Descarcerare")

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key findings

In Romania, the concept "**essential workers**" has been **used officially only in the context of the vaccination campaign** to indicate the categories with primary access to COVID-19 vaccines: i.e. public administration staff at various levels, also including those from the sectors tackled by this study (healthcare and long-term care, agriculture, transport); staff from the vital economic sectors, including priority sectors tackled by this study and other sectors (e.g. energy, production of fuel); staff from other public/private sectors (e.g. mass media, funeral services). While no official definition of essential workers was provided in the legislation regarding COVID-19, the **Romanian Labour Market Code** foresees the **existence of "continuous fire" units** where production cannot stop, without specifically identifying them.

However, even in the absence of a specific identification of essential workers, the **Romanian legislation** that was adopted in the context of COVID-19 listed a **series of measures specifically targeted at sectors deemed vital for the economy**, including both the sectors addressed by the current study and other sectors.

In the legislation adopted in the context of COVID-19 in 2020, no reference is made to platform workers in delivery services. Reference to workers in the food delivery sector (irrespective of whether employed by a digital platform service company or not) is made only in the legislation introducing a partial lockdown (from 21.00 to 05.00) in November 2021. The annex to the Governmental decision 101/8th of November 2021 specifically mentions these workers, guaranteeing their mobility without any kind of restriction after 21.00. The same right applies also to workers from the healthcare and social care (residential centres) sectors, transport and fuel distribution. The other sectors to which specific provisions were applied in 2020 are not named in the annex to the Governmental decision 101/8th of November 2021.

Workers in the essential sectors are varied in their characteristics, which makes it difficult to provide an overview of their features. However, some general trends can be identified when it comes to gender and work contracts. **Men** constitute the majority of workers in **transport and agriculture**, while **women** are more present than men in the **healthcare and long-term care** sector. Regarding labour contracts, **most of the essential workers are employees**, except workers in the agricultural sectors who are often self-employed or contributing family workers.

Despite the heterogeneity of the sectors from which essential workers come, the analysis has identified a series of **common issues related to their working conditions**: low wages and gender wage gaps; in work poverty; poor working conditions, such as, for instance, outdated infrastructure and equipment, low flexibility, low attention to ensuring and respecting safety at work; limited participation in lifelong learning programmes; limited social dialogue, in particular in small enterprises and in the platform delivery sector.

In Romania, the **impact of COVID-19** on the **employment level** of essential workers was **rather limited**. However, COVID-19 **impacted** on the **duration of the working week**, even though the intensity of the impact was different both between essential sectors, and also within the same sectors. The reduction in the working week also resulted in a reduction of the impacted workers' earnings. However, the limited duration of the lockdown foreseen by the Romanian authorities contributed to limiting the reduction in the workers' earnings. Besides reduction in earnings, COVID-19 **impacted negatively on working conditions** in all sectors analysed, triggering a worsening of working conditions (e.g. psychological distress, limited work-life balance, increase in domestic violence).

Nevertheless, COVID-19 also had some **positive effects** (e.g. increase in the awareness of the need to improve infrastructure and work equipment, increase in the awareness on the impact of the shortage of specific categories of medical staff, increase in the wages of civil servants from the public healthcare sector and planning of measures to deal with these issues in the context of the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience - NPRR).

The Romanian authorities have adopted **several measures to support essential workers**, especially in the health, long-term and social care sectors, consisting mainly of economic incentives/bonuses; conciliation of childcare and professional life during periods of school closures; prevention of COVID-19 transmission by promoting staggered work; extension of paid medical and quarantine leave for all employees, and improvement in their professional competencies (e.g. digital skills). However, **certain measures** adopted by the Romanian authorities also **impacted negatively on the working conditions and well-being** of essential workers, in particular in health, social and long-term care. In these sectors, holidays were blocked and in some cases isolation at the workplace was foreseen. Furthermore, resignations were also blocked.

Interviewees have provided several indications on future policy actions to improve the working conditions of essential workers: increase in minimum wages and reduction in in-work poverty; increase in lifelong training programmes and participation; improvement in the offer and quality of jobs; reduction in labour shortages, especially in the sectors most affected through measures to encourage the retention of the Romanian workforce; innovation of infrastructure and technology; increase in workers' digital skills and digitisation of businesses; revision of the social dialogue law; psychological support (especially for workers in health and social care sectors).

The **Romanian NPRR aims to take action in many of the areas for improvement suggested** by interviewees (e.g. qualitative jobs, digitisation and digital skills, reduction of labour force shortage in the healthcare and long-term care sector, improvement of social infrastructure).

Besides measures at national level, interviewees also suggest a **strengthening of EU actions** aimed at reducing differences in social and economic development between Eastern and Western Europe, coordinating labour policies to avoid imbalances due to workforce drain, defining a common framework for regulating labour in multinational companies, and a monitoring of whether social dialogue is respected in Romania.

1. NATIONAL DEFINITION, SHARE IN OVERALL EMPLOYMENT AND MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF ESSENTIAL WORKERS BEFORE COVID-19

KEY FINDINGS

Essential workers are not legally defined by the labour market legislation in Romania. Even though there is no legal definition of essential workers, the Romanian legislation foresees the existence of certain sectors where the activity cannot be stopped. However, these sectors are not specified in the legislation. The expression "essential workers" was used in Romania only in the context of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, which identified public administration staff at various levels, staff from the vital economic sectors and staff from other public/private sectors as essential workers. The legislation adopted in the context of COVID-19 in 2020 foresees a series of sectors deemed relevant, in which specific legislation applied to workers (e.g. cancellation of holidays, isolation at the workplace, etc.): e.g. agriculture and food production, processing and commercialisation; transport; healthcare and long-term care; social care; telecommunications; waste management.

In 2020, 8,504,666 workers were active in sectors considered relevant in the framework of the COVID-19 legislation. Over 70% of them are employees, while 15% are self-employed. Most of the female workers are concentrated in health and long-term care and social care.

The main common problems regarding working conditions of workers from essential sectors are: shortage of the workforce; low wages and gender wage gap; poor working conditions; limited participation in lifelong training programmes and limited role of social partners.

a. Definition of essential workers

No legal definition of essential workers has been provided by the Romanian authorities **before or during the COVID-19** crisis. However, the expression "**essential workers**" was **used** for the **first time** in the context of the **COVID-19 vaccination campaign**, when a series of workers was identified as such, as detailed further on. Nevertheless, this definition is limited to the vaccination campaign and does not imply specific regulations in the working or payment conditions of these workers.

Interviews confirm that, while the phrase "**essential workers**" has started to emerge in the context of COVID-19, long **before the COVID-19 crisis** Romanian legislation identified the existence of certain **sectors of activity "with a continuous fire"**, where production could not be stopped. During the communist period, such sectors included those where there was a significant risk level if installations, equipment or machinery were shut down, such as factories, plants, laboratories or other, similar organisations. However, legislation regulating these sectors was abolished with the Governmental Decision HG No. 233/2004 and Law 319/2006. The current Labour Market Code refers to sectors "with a continuous fire" as sectors where activity cannot be stopped due to the nature of the production process or the specificities of the activities undertaken. However, the current Labour Code does not include a specific list of these sectors or activities¹.

While no legal definition of essential workers has been adopted **in the context of COVID-19, legislation** introducing the emergency state (Decree 195 adopted on 16 March 2020), the alert state (Governmental Decision No. 24 adopted on 14 May 2020) and legislation introducing specific

¹ Legislatia muncii, "Prevederile legale referitoare la unitatile cu foc continuu". Available at: <https://legislatiamuncii.manager.ro/a/9583/prevederile-legale-referitoare-la-unitatile-cu-foc-continuu.html>.

regulations of working conditions in the context of COVID-19 (e.g. Law 19 of 2020) identify **specific sectors of activity** where **working regulations might be different from others**. For instance, the Decree 195 of 2020 foresees that measures will be undertaken to ensure work continuity in sectors regarding the supply, offer, maintenance and reparation of resources and primary raw materials and/or half-processed materials needed for ensuring the continuous functioning of the **national energy system**, and of all **public utility services** (e.g. extraction, production, processing, transport, distribution). Furthermore, the decree foresees that some of the measures regarding working conditions (e.g. paternal leave during the suspension of in-person activities in schools, organisation of strikes, the right to resignation) are not entirely applicable to certain categories of workers: those from the **national defence system**, from **prisons**, from **health institutions** and other categories of workers that can be established through specific decisions of the Ministries of Internal Affairs; Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism; Energy; Transport and Infrastructure; and Communications. Other pieces of legislation further specify these categories of workers:

- **(essential) workers from the production, transport and distribution of electricity and natural gas** and from the **supply, extraction, production and processing of resources and raw and/or half-processed materials needed for their functioning** (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 4 of 29 March 2020 regarding preventive isolation at the workplace; Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas; Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools);
- **operational units in the nuclear sector** (e.g. Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools);
- **care and maintenance of specific installations and equipment** (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 4 of 29 March 2020 regarding preventive isolation at the workplace);
- **public order** (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas);
- **national security** (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas; Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools);
- **health system** (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 4 of 29 March 2020 regarding preventive isolation at the workplace; Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas; Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools);
- **emergency services** (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas);
- **local public administration** (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas);
- **social care and protection** (Military Ordinance No. 4 of 29 March 2020 regarding preventive isolation at the workplace; Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas; Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools);
- **judiciary** (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas);

- **public utility services** (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas);
- **agriculture and food production, processing and commercialisation** (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas; Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools);
- **water supply** (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas; Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools);
- **telecommunications**, including public TV and radio (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas; Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools);
- **transport**, including public transport (e.g. Military Ordinance No. 6 of 30 March 2020 regarding mobility in quarantined areas; Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools);
- **sectors/activities "with continuous fire"** (e.g. Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools);
- **waste and cleaning management** (e.g. Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools);
- **heat production and distribution** (e.g. Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools);
- **fuel production and distribution** (e.g. Law 19 of March 2020 regarding the right to paternal leave during the suspension of in-person classes of schools).

The above-mentioned legislation does not make any specific mention of platform workers in delivery services.

The above-mentioned sectors seem to also be confirmed after the renewal of the alert state on 14 May 2020, even though the Governmental Decision No. 24 lifted restrictions in a number of other sectors (e.g. culture and medical services different from the emergency ones).

The same sectors have also been considered a priority in the **vaccination campaign**. However, unlike the legislation adopted during the emergency and alert state, **within the national vaccination campaign** the expression "**essential workers**" is **used officially** with specific reference to certain sectors of activity:

- **Public administration staff at various levels:** key staff from the state institutions, such as the Parliament, the Constitutional Court, the Presidential Administration, Government, Economic and Social Council, People's Advocate – Office of the Ombudsman, Legislative Council, National Bank of Romania, Financial Audit Court, Competition Council, and ministries and institutions under their control; staff from the national defence system, public order, national security; judiciary; *social care and protection* staff in direct contact with beneficiaries; *health system staff*; local public administration staff; staff from the National Weather Administration; members of diplomatic organisations and their family members; defence; staff from the public education sector; staff of religious institutions.

- **Staff from the vital economic sectors:** *processing, distribution and commercialisation of primary food; water production, purging, transport and distribution; electric plants, production, transport and distribution of power; production, transport and distribution of natural gas; production, distribution and transport of fuel; production, distribution and transport of drugs and medical equipment; transport of people and goods; essential railways, airports and ports; telecommunications, public TV and radio; sailors and their crews; staff on maritime platforms, and maritime drilling.*
- **Staff from other public/private sectors:** registered lawyers; notaries; postal and courier staff; mass-media staff subject to the risk of infection; waste management and public cleaning; funeral services; veterinary systems; *staff from agriculture and essential food industries.*

Some of the interviewees pointed out that the vaccination campaign has adopted an excessively broad understanding of essential workers. Furthermore, interviews also reveal that the understanding of essential workers at the level of public opinion has often been limited to doctors and nurses, without also considering the contribution of people from other fields (e.g. food, transport, waste management) or activities in the same sector (e.g. installation maintenance in medical care units). This may also be due to the fact that many economic sectors have continued their activity in person even during the state of emergency and restrictions to personal mobility.

In 2021, following the availability of anti-COVID 19 vaccine, the restrictions imposed were less harsh, resulting in the reduction of differences in measures adopted for the various economic sectors. However, in the context of the partial lockdown from november 2021, the healthcare and social care sectors, the fuel distribution and the transport sector continue to be considered prioritary (i.e. the Annex to the Governmental Decision no. 101/8th of November 2021 grants free mobility after 21.00 to workers from these sectors, while the other sectors mentioned in the 2020 legislation are not specifically mentioned in this Annex).

b. Essential workers: characteristics

Even though an official definition of essential workers is not provided by the Romanian authorities, the workers that might be considered essential (following the application of different rules regarding work continuity) cover many different fields or specific activities within the same sector. This makes it difficult to provide a coherent picture of their characteristics and working conditions, as they differ from one sector to another. However, the next paragraphs include some specificities on their characteristics and interconnected problems.

At the end of 2020, there were **8,504,666 people in employment** in Romania, of which 77 % were employees, 15 % self-employed, 7 % contributing family workers², 1 % employers and 0.02 % were members of an agricultural holding or a cooperative.

When looking at the gender distribution by employment status, it can be seen that **most of the employers** (78 %), **self-employed** (72 %), **members of an agricultural holding** or a **cooperative** (65 %) and **employees** (57 %) are **men**, while on the contrary most of the contributing family workers (66 %) are women.

Data collected by the National Romanian Institute of Statistics on the distribution of employed people by sector of activity provides only an aggregated picture of the sectors including "essential" workers, without being able to provide a detailed image of their characteristics.

² They are persons who carry out their activity within an economic family unit run by a family member or relative, not receiving remuneration as salary or pay in kind. Available at: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>.

Table 1: Characteristics of workers in sectors including "essential" workers

People in employment by sectors of activity in 2020 (% of overall people in employment)	
<i>Agriculture, forestry and fish farming</i>	20 %
Manufacturing	18 %
Trade	16 %
<i>Transport and storage</i>	6 %
Public administration and defence	5 %
<i>Health and social work</i>	5 %
Information and communications	3 %
Mining and quarrying	1 %
Production and distribution of electric and thermal energy, gas and warm water and air conditioning	1 %
Water distribution, sanitation, waste management, decontamination activities	1 %
Gender distribution: female employment by sectors of activity (% of employment in the respective sector)	
<i>Health and social care</i>	82 %
Trade	55 %
Manufacturing	43 %
<i>Agriculture, forestry, fish farming</i>	41 %
Information and communications	36 %
Public administration and defence	33 %
Water distribution; sanitation, waste management, decontamination activities	22 %
Production and distribution of electric and thermal energy, gas and warm water, and air conditioning	19 %
Mining and quarrying	15 %
<i>Transport and storage</i>	12 %

Source: Author's elaboration on 2020 data of the Romanian National Institute of Statistics (TEMPO online database).

Self-employed and contributing family workers are mostly concentrated in agriculture: 69 % and 98 % respectively.

When it comes to working conditions, interviewees pointed out that some of the most common problems in all sectors are the following:

- **Shortage of workforce**

Romania has been facing an **increasing shortage of qualified workforce in all sectors**, in the context of a continuous increase in migration, ageing of the population, unused labour potential of specific groups (e.g. long-term unemployed, Roma), a mismatch between the education system and the labour market (Eurofound, 2021; European Commission, 2020; Vasilescu, 2019). The shortage of the labour

workforce is particularly relevant in various sectors, including those with essential workers (e.g. manufacturing, trade, industry, public administration, and health and social care). A specific situation is registered in the *healthcare sector* where the lack of medical staff has become significant, impacting on the quality of the health services. According to the National Economics Institute of the Romanian Academy (2020), Romania registers the highest level of shortage of doctors and nurses among the EU countries: 2.9 doctors/1000 inhabitants and 3.6 nurses/1000 inhabitants in Romania in 2017 compared to 3.6 doctors/1000 inhabitants and 8.5 nurses/1000 inhabitants as the EU average in the same year; in 2019, 53 % of Romanian municipalities registered a deficit of family doctors, while 2.5 % of the Romanian population had no family doctor in their municipality. In fact, **health and social care** remains among the sectors with the **highest rate of vacancies in 2020** (1.52 % in health and social care compared to 0.77 % in all sectors). Health and social care is preceded only by public administration (1.96 % vacancies compared to 0.77 % vacancies in all sectors). Other sectors registering a high level of vacancies are **transport and storage** (1.12 %) and ICT (1.11 %)³.

- **Low wages and gender wage gaps**

Interviewees pointed out that **low wages** are a relevant **problem** in the Romanian labour market, **irrespective of the activity field**. According to EUROSTAT, the average hourly cost of labour in Romania amounts to around EUR 8.10 per hour compared to EUR 28.50 in the EU 27 (excluding agriculture and public administration), so approximatively 3.5 times lower. The labour cost per hour remains far below the EU average in all economic sectors, including those employing "essential" workers⁴.

In 2020, the average monthly nominal gross earnings amounted to RON 5,213 (= EUR 1,053⁵), +7 % compared to 2019. Among the sectors including essential workers, the **highest wages** are registered in the field of **public administration and defence, and compulsory social security**, while the **lowest** are registered in **food manufacturing**, followed by **crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities** (see Table 6.1 in the Annex for further details). According to the National Institute of Economics of the Romanian Academy (2020), low wages in the agricultural sector is one of the main drivers for the migration of Romanian agricultural workers, which has not stopped even during the COVID-19pandemic.

In 2020, **women earned 99 % of men's wages**. This percentage is **lower in numerous sectors** including **essential workers** (see Table 6.2 in Annex). Nevertheless, in certain sectors, women's earnings are higher than those of men, for instance in public administration and defence (for further details see Table 6.2 in the Annex).

The minimum monthly wage in 2021 amounts to RON 2,300⁶ (= EUR 464). Despite a 3 % increase compared to 2020, it continues to be the **second lowest in the EU**⁷. Overall, around **20 % of full-time employees receive the minimum wage**, which creates a compressed wage distribution (European Commission, 2020). Interviewees pointed out that the minimum wage does not cover the minimum

³ Institutul National de Statistica, 2020, "Locuri de munca vacante". Available at: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>.

⁴ InvestRomania, 2020, *Wages&salaries*. Available at: <http://investromania.gov.ro/web/why-invest/wages-salaries/>.

⁵ Value calculated on 28 September 2021.

⁶ Florin Barbuta, 2021, "Salariul minim 2021, în Monitorul oficial. Nu se aplică de la 1 ianuarie, că așa a fost scris actul. Cornel Grama: Dacă sunt patroni care vor să respecte legea la virgulă, vor mări din 13 ianuarie". Available at: https://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-finante_banci-24538860-salariul-minim-2021-monitorul-oficial-cornel-grama-patroni-respecte-legea-vor-mari-din-13-ianuarie.htm.

⁷ EUROSTAT, 2021, Disparities in minimum wages across the EU. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20210205-1>.

costs of goods and services, which amounted to RON 2,818 in 2020⁸. This implies that a **series of workers remain at risk of poverty**. As pointed out by interviewees and literature, **in-work poverty** remains a significant issue in Romania in all sectors of activity. In 2019, it amounted to 15.7 % compared to the EU average of 9.2 %⁹.

- **Poor working conditions**

Some of the interviewees pointed out that poor working conditions represent a general problem in Romania, especially in organisations where there are no employees' unions. It is worth noting that, following the 2011 Social Dialogue Law, it has become extremely difficult to establish unions especially in enterprises with a reduced number of employees (e.g. small and medium enterprises), limiting the number of employees belonging to a union (e.g. 23 % collective bargaining coverage¹⁰). This also impacts on workers' bargaining power as well as on working conditions.

A significant issue regarding working conditions refers to the low quality of work **infrastructure/technology**. In certain sectors, such as health and social care, work infrastructure/technology is outdated, **which impacts negatively on working conditions and productivity**. In the healthcare sector, limited access to qualitative and up-to-date infrastructure represents one of the main drivers for doctors' emigration (Vasilescu, 2018).

Limited working time flexibility represents another significant issue, especially in recent years. In 2019, according to EUROSTAT data, Romania registered lower levels of work flexibility compared to the European average: for 66 % of employed people, working time is mainly decided by the employer compared to 59 % at EU level. Among the sectors employing essential workers, the percentage is particularly high in industry (92 %), **public administration, defence, education, human health and social work activities** (80 %) and wholesale and retail trade, **transport, accommodation and food service activities** (79 %), while it is particularly **low in agriculture, forestry and fishing**. This is also due to the fact that in the former sectors most of the workers are employees, while in the latter most are self-employed or contributing family workers¹¹. The limited flexibility of the work schedule is also shown by the difficulty that employed Romanian people face in taking one or two hours off at short notice: 57 % in Romania compared to the EU average of 32 %. People employed in industry and public administration, defence, education, human health and social work activities are those facing the greatest difficulties¹².

Work safety represents another significant issue. Even though the number of reported accidents has decreased in recent years, interviewees pointed out that the serious work accidents which occurred in four Romanian hospitals due, in particular, to the old infrastructure, prove that work safety is still a relevant issue. Some of the interviewees underlined that it is hard to hold private employers accountable for safety in the workplace when public institutions themselves do not always respect safety measures.

⁸ Hotnews, 2020, "Coşul minim pentru un trai decent, actualizat pentru anul 2020. Cea mai mare creştere a cheltuielilor a fost la capitolul locuinţă". Available at: https://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-finante_banci-24428459-cosul-minim-pentru-trai-decent-actualizat-pentru-anul-2020-cea-mai-mare-crestere-cheltuielilor-fost-capitolul-locuinta.htm.

⁹ EUROSTAT, 2021, *In work at-risk-of-poverty rate*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_01_41/default/table?lang=en.

¹⁰ Eurofound, 2021, *Living and working in Romania*. Available at: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ro/country/romania>.

¹¹ EUROSTAT, 2021, *Persons in employment by working time flexibility, economic activity (NACE Rev. 2) and occupation*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/LFSO_19FXWT03_custom_1341649/default/table?lang=en.

¹² EUROSTAT, 2021, *Persons in employment by level of difficulty to take one or two hours off at short notice, economic activity (NACE Rev. 2) and occupation*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfs0_19fxwt06/default/table?lang=en.

- **Limited participation in lifelong training programmes**

Both interviews and literature (EC, 2020; Vasilescu, 2019) underline that continuous training programmes remain a relevant problem in all economic sectors and more generally in society. According to EUROSTAT data, in 2020 only 1 % of adults aged 25–64 had a recent learning experience (i.e. in the last 4 weeks) in Romania, compared to the EU-27 average of 9.2 %¹³. Interviewees pointed out that this represents a significant problem in the context of the green transition, considering that many low-qualified jobs are expected to diminish.

- **Limited role of social partners**

Both case study interviews and literature (Eurofound 2021, European Commission) underline that the engagement of social partners in Romania in addressing labour market challenges remains limited. A revision of the 2011 social dialogue law is ongoing and is expected to improve the effectiveness of social dialogue. According to case interviews, the unions' low involvement in the definition of labour market policies also limits the mainstreaming of the workers' perspectives and needs in these policies.

¹³ EUROSTAT, 2020, *Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex and age*, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TRNG_LFS_01_custom_1801906/default/table?lang=en.

2. MAIN IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF ESSENTIAL WORKERS

KEY FINDINGS

COVID-19 impacted especially on the duration of the working week and, hence, earnings of essential workers, even though the intensity of the impact varied extensively both between essential sectors and within the same sector. COVID-19 also impacted negatively on the working conditions of workers, worsening the work-life balance and creating psychological distress in particular due to fear of contracting COVID-19 disease, stressful working conditions, pressure to adapt to the new situation and maintain business and uncertainty of procedures to be implemented and respected. Furthermore, COVID-19 continued to impact negatively on the existing problems such as low participation in lifelong learning or the limited role of social partners.

During the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, the emigration of Romanians continued to remain an issue, putting additional pressure on sectors hit by the COVID-19 pandemic like health and long-term care, social care or agriculture.

COVID-19 also had some positive effects on the Romanian labour market in some of the essential sectors (e.g. health and long-term care). These include raised awareness of the need to improve infrastructure and work equipment and planning of specific measures; increased awareness of the impact of shortages of specific categories of medical staff; increased wages of civil servants; and increase in digital services.

The **impact of COVID-19** on employment in the **sectors employing essential workers** and, more generally on employment in Romania, **has been rather limited**. Overall, the percentage of employed people has diminished by 2 % in 2020 compared to 2019.

When it comes to the impact of COVID-19 on sectors including "essential" workers, **manufacturing and agriculture, forestry, fish farming, and manufacturing lost the highest percentage of workers in 2020** compared to 2019, followed by public administration and defence, and mining and quarrying (see Table 6.3 in the Annex). On the contrary, information and communication registered **the highest increase** in employment compared to 2019, followed by **transport and storage** (see Table 6.3 in the Annex).

For the **impact of COVID-19** on the **gender distribution of employment**, a **heterogeneous picture** is observed not only among sectors, but also among workers from the same sector based on their employment status. Among the sectors including essential workers, the distribution of electric and thermal energy, gas and warm water and air conditioning registered the highest increase in women's employment (+41 %), while the health sector registered the lowest (+2 %) (see Tables 6.3 and 6.4). Furthermore, in 2020 a relevant increase in women's self-employment has been noted (see Table 6.3 in Annex). On the one hand the **increase in female self-employment** contributes to reducing the gender gap in the labour market, but on the other hand it **puts women in a position of vulnerability** as it is less stable and it offers a lower social protection coverage. This may result in women having higher financial dependency.

While the impact of COVID-19 on employment has been limited, its **impact** on the **duration of the working week** has been higher (Eurofound, 2021). The working week diminished by 4 % in Q2 2020

(when the emergency state was adopted) compared to Q2 2019. A **2–4 % reduction**¹⁴ in the **duration of the working week** in this period can be noted, also in the case of sectors including **essential workers** for which data is available (**agriculture, forestry and fishing**, mining and quarrying, manufacturing, electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply). The reduction in the working week is also confirmed by interviewees. For instance, the interviewed frontline worker in the food commercialisation sector pointed out that during the emergency state, the working week was reduced by half. However, as pointed out by the interviewees, **the level of reduction varied extensively both within the same sector and among sectors**. For instance, according to interviewees, in the **health and social assistance sector**, the medical and non-medical staff with specialisations related to COVID-19 registered long working hours, while colleagues from other specialisations faced a reduction in working hours due to the entire healthcare assistance sector concentrating on the treatment of COVID-19. Similar situations were also registered in the **social assistance sector**. For instance, following the restrictions introduced by the emergency state, workers from residential care centres experienced an increase in their working hours, while workers from day centres experienced a reduction in their activity. As revealed by the interviewees, during the emergency state a particular situation was registered in the residential social care field, where, in some cases, workers were obliged to work 15-day shifts, isolated inside the centre. Interviewees underlined that in the health and social care sector, increases in working hours were also due to the relevant shortage of workforce, especially in certain sectors (e.g. community nurses, intensive care medical staff, anaesthetists, public defence staff, firefighters, public services staff). The increase in the working hours for these categories of workers **impacted negatively on work-life balance**. The impact was higher for women, who are the majority in these sectors. Interviewees revealed that, considering women's significant role in family and household care in Romania, this situation also resulted in an **increase in family conflicts and violence** against women. Furthermore, it also **impacted negatively on the psychological well-being** of these workers. As pointed out by interviewees, many of them experienced burnout situations.

The **negative impact on the psychological well-being** of frontline workers was a common issue in the first two waves, irrespective of the activity sector. Different causes have contributed to it:

- *Fear of getting COVID-19 disease*, as revealed by all interviewees. In certain cases, and sectors, this fear resulted in resignations and/or workers' isolation and breach of/refusing contracts, which contributed to increasing the workload of the remaining workers:

"I had colleagues, especially men over 40 years old, who have resigned and retired to the countryside with their families due to the fear of getting the disease". (Interview with frontline worker in the commercial food sector).

"Every one of us fears the possibility of getting infected with the new coronavirus". (Bus driver)¹⁵.

"When I came across a person who was not wearing a mask, I tried to avoid them as much as possible. At the same time, I did not touch things that had been touched by others before. In some cases, when I came back from work I could not enter my room as I had colleagues who

¹⁴ EUROSTAT, 2021, *Average number of actual weekly hours of work in main job, by sex, professional status, full-time/part-time and economic activity (from 2008 onwards, NACE Rev. 2) – hours*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfsq_ewhan2/default/table?lang=en.

¹⁵ Carina Chici, 2021, "Am povestit cu 7 lucrători esențiali, aflați în linia întâi, despre ce a însemnat adaptarea în pandemie pentru ei". Available at: <https://www.clujlife.com/2021/02/24/am-povestit-cu-7-lucratori-esentiali-aflati-in-linia-intai-despre-ce-a-insemnat-adaptarea-in-pandemie-pentru-ei/>.

were sick. We started to isolate one from another. We started to stop being friends. Sometimes, we started to be ... so to say ... enemies". (International truck driver)¹⁶.

"The companies that should have supported us in carrying out significant infrastructural works started to find excuses to turn us down. To a certain extent I understood them, but this did not decrease the workload and stress put on us". (General assistant in a Romanian hospital)¹⁷.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fear of getting the disease was accentuated by the lack of protective equipment and the lack of knowledge on how the procedures should be adopted to avoid contamination.

"The psychological pressure was even higher when you had to enter a room with people that had not yet received confirmation of being/not being infected with the coronavirus. During the period when the protective equipment was limited this was the hardest aspect to bear: on the one hand you were worried about getting infected and passing on the virus, and on the other hand of using up the protective equipment needlessly". (General assistant in a Romanian hospital)¹⁸

Interviewees pointed out that these issues have been overcome in the second part of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 when specific procedures have been adopted to avoid, as much as possible, contact between people, and protective equipment has been made available.

- *Stressful working conditions*, especially in sectors foreseeing interaction with the public (e.g. trade, health and social care), due to people's state of agitation and fear of each other:

(...) "work with people implies establishing bonds with customers, especially when the same people come daily into the store where you work. Before the pandemic you could talk with people, you could see a reaction on their face, be it a smile or a sign of disappointment after a hard day. At once, with the pandemic everything has changed. Everything is darker and people enter the store as if they were robots, they throw everything they need in the basket and quickly leave without any kind of reaction." (Cashier in a Romanian supermarket).

"I still remember the queue that extended up to the boulevard. Dozens of panicked people who wanted to buy disinfectant and masks (that were not available of course). I still remember the period when the elderly could go outside only at certain hours of the day: it was a disaster; the queue to the pharmacy was endless." (Pharmacist in a Romanian city)¹⁹.

- *Pressure to adapt to the new situation and maintain business*, especially in the private sector

¹⁶ Carina Chici, 2021, "Am povestit cu 7 lucrători esențiali, aflați în linia întâi, despre ce a însemnat adaptarea în pandemie pentru ei". Available at: <https://www.clujlife.com/2021/02/24/am-povestit-cu-7-lucratori-esentiali-aflati-in-linia-intai-despre-ce-a-insemnat-adaptarea-in-pandemie-pentru-ei/>.

¹⁷ Carina Chici, 2021, "Am povestit cu 7 lucrători esențiali, aflați în linia întâi, despre ce a însemnat adaptarea în pandemie pentru ei". Available at: <https://www.clujlife.com/2021/02/24/am-povestit-cu-7-lucratori-esentiali-aflati-in-linia-intai-despre-ce-a-insemnat-adaptarea-in-pandemie-pentru-ei/>.

¹⁸ Carina Chici, 2021, "Am povestit cu 7 lucrători esențiali, aflați în linia întâi, despre ce a însemnat adaptarea în pandemie pentru ei". Available at: <https://www.clujlife.com/2021/02/24/am-povestit-cu-7-lucratori-esentiali-aflati-in-linia-intai-despre-ce-a-insemnat-adaptarea-in-pandemie-pentru-ei/>.

¹⁹ Carina Chici, 2021, "Am povestit cu 7 lucrători esențiali, aflați în linia întâi, despre ce a însemnat adaptarea în pandemie pentru ei". Available at: <https://www.clujlife.com/2021/02/24/am-povestit-cu-7-lucratori-esentiali-aflati-in-linia-intai-despre-ce-a-insemnat-adaptarea-in-pandemie-pentru-ei/>.

- *Uncertainty of procedures to be implemented and respected:*

"Going through the second wave was even harder as each country had its own legislation and its own rules to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. You had to respect the rules of each country, of each region of each state you entered. You did not know whether you were allowed to enter or not: there were things that could change from one moment to the next. All this happened in a context where you also experienced pressure from the employer. As a truck driver, you are pressed to arrive at the delivery location on time and to challenge legislation. If employers abroad respect the rules, in Romania, this issue is critical."(International truck driver)²⁰.

Interviewees pointed out that in the context of the fourth wave currently ongoing (September 2021) in Romania, the negative impact of COVID-19 on workers' psychological well-being continues to be a problem. Interviewees also revealed that **all the critical issues** that characterised the Romanian labour market **before the pandemic** (see previous paragraph) **continue to be an issue even today**.

Specific attention should be paid to the migration issue. **While an increase in Romanians' return migration was registered in 2020, at the same time the emigration of the workforce from certain sectors (e.g. social and long-term care, agriculture) has not stopped putting additional pressures on the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic**, as pointed out by interviewees.

The situation of immigrant workers²¹ in Romania has not represented a relevant issue on the Romanian public agenda. However, the issue was raised in the context of the vaccination campaign, due to the lack of information available in foreign languages and targeted to foreign workers from essential sectors (e.g. food production, distribution and the commercial sector)²².

Interviews reveal that the COVID-19 pandemic also had **some positive effects in certain sectors** (e.g. health and social care):

- An increase in the awareness of the need to improve infrastructure and update the work equipment and planning of specific measures, in the context of the NRR.
- An increase in the awareness of the impact of the shortage of specific categories of medical staff (e.g. community nurses). However, the increase in the awareness does not seem to be followed by specific measures to increase staff in these specialisations.
- An increase in the wages of civil servants (medical and non-medical) from the public healthcare sector, which dealt with inequalities between medical and non-medical staff in previous measures. However, the measure has been contested by some of the trade unions due the criteria adopted for the increases granted and its limit to the alert state period²³.

At society level, there is a relevant improvement in the increase of digitisation of services, especially in the private sector and to a certain extent also in the public sector.

²⁰ Carina Chici, 2021, "Am povestit cu 7 lucrători esențiali, aflați în linia întâi, despre ce a însemnat adaptarea în pandemie pentru ei". Available at: <https://www.clujlife.com/2021/02/24/am-povestit-cu-7-lucratori-esentiali-aflati-in-linia-intai-despre-ce-a-insemnat-adaptarea-in-pandemie-pentru-ei/>.

²¹ In 2020, the three largest groups of immigrants in Romania were: people from Moldavia (62 % of the overall); people from other countries, such as for instance Philippines, Sri Lanka, India (23 %) and people from Ukraine (8 %). Available at: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>.

²² Adina Florea, 2021, "Zeci de mii de muncitori străini din România au dreptul să se vaccineze, dar nu știu asta. Autoritățile nu comunică în engleză. Imigrările: "Nu avem astfel de responsabilități". Available at: <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/muncitori-straini-vaccinare-autoritati-nu-comunica-engleza-3455972>.

²³ Eurofound, 2021, *Temporary substantial salary increases for public health staff in the pandemic conditions*. Available at: https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/RO-2020-33_1393.html.

3. MAIN LEGISLATION, POLICIES, COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS AND EMPLOYERS' MEASURES ADOPTED IN THE COUNTRY TO SUPPORT ESSENTIAL WORKERS

KEY FINDINGS

When considering the key policy interventions, the analysis shows that most of the measures taken to support essential workers focused on the healthcare and long-term care and social care sectors and consisted mainly of economic incentives and bonuses. However, some of the measures adopted in the context of COVID-19 to support workers applied also to other sectors: reconciliation of childcare and professional life during school closures; prevention of COVID-19 supported through the promotion of staggered work; extension of paid medical and quarantine leave for all employees, and improvement in their professional skills (e.g. digital skills).

Certain measures adopted by the Romanian authorities also impacted negatively on the working conditions and the well-being of essential workers, in particular in health, social and long-term care. In these sectors, holidays were blocked and in some cases isolation at the workplace was foreseen. Furthermore, resignations were also put on hold.

Besides national measures, specific measures to support workers were adopted at the company level (e.g. provision of protective measures; adoption of online meetings, etc.).

Interviewees pointed out that **legislation adopted to support essential workers** has been mainly **limited to the health sector**. The main important piece of legislation adopted by the Romanian authorities regards GEO No. 131/2020 of the Romanian Government. This introduces a **30 % increase in the basic salary of civil servants employed in the public health directorates and Prefect's institutions** involved in the missions, to prevent and combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic during the state of alert. The measure foresees a **40 % increase** in the basic salaries of the **Executive Directors and Deputy Executive Directors of the public health directorates**. The staff of the Prefect's institutions who will benefit from the increase will be decided by the Prefect, based on a justified proposal by the direct manager.

The measure has been contested by a part of the Romanian trade unions due to the lack of justification for the increase in the wages of the managers of the public health directorates and also due to the limit of the wage increase in the alert state²⁴.

Other measures aimed at increasing earnings in the health and social care sector were adopted in 2020. GEO No. 43/2020 foresees the introduction of a **risk incentive amounting to gross RON 2,500 for several categories of workers in the healthcare sector** (e.g. medical staff, medical and health staff and auxiliary staff from medical family offices, medical test laboratories, medical image laboratories, specialised clinics, community pharmacies, dentists, providers of medical services that have a contract with the public social insurance unit and that were active during the emergency state, or that had infected staff due to their activities, or that dealt with patients suspected of or being infected with coronavirus, medical staff from schools). The workers foreseen by GEO No. 43/2020 can benefit from risk incentives a maximum of two times, irrespective of the number of days worked in this period: between 16 March 2020 and 14 April 2020, and between 15 April 2020 and 14 May 2020. The GEO also

²⁴ Eurofound, 2020, *Temporary substantial salary increases for public health staff in the pandemic conditions*. Available at: https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/RO-2020-33_1393.html.

foresees a **risk incentive amounting to RON 2,500 for staff from the social and community assistance sector** involved directly in the care and/or support of the elderly, children, people with disabilities and other vulnerable categories. The risk incentive is **granted during the emergency period** (one month)²⁵.

The Order No. 1.070/94/2.087/2020 foresees an **increase in the risk bonus** foreseen by the Law 56/2020 for **staff in the health sector** in direct contact with patients who have tested positive for coronavirus. The increase in the bonus granted amounts to **30 % for staff**, which provides medical assistance/qualified primary help to/transport of **patients who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 with medium/severe symptoms** and **25 % for staff in contact with patients with other forms of the virus**. The healthcare staff who can benefit from this include the following:

- medical and health and auxiliary staff from medical units, medical and social assistance units and medical units, community pharmacies, family doctor clinics, dental units, and other providers of health or social assistance services directly involved in actions and missions related to the prevention, management and fighting of COVID-19 infections;
- military staff – paramedics and medical staff – of the structures under the coordination of the Emergency Department of the Ministry for Internal Affairs directly involved in actions and missions related to the prevention, management and fight against COVID-19 infections;
- paramedical staff of the SMURD (Serviciul Mobil de Urgență, Reanimare și Descarcerare) units specialised in offering a preliminary qualified help who are paid by the local public administration;
- the entire staff of the hospitals ensuring medical assistance to patients infected with SARS-CoV as well as the support hospitals²⁶.

The order foresees that the medical staff who registered physical or psychological diseases or who became invalid following their involvement in actions against COVID-19 do not benefit from this bonus if the injury/invalidity occurred due to the awareness of a breakdown of the legislation in force²⁷.

The Government Resolution No. 1035/2020 foresees the granting of a **bonus for extremely dangerous work conditions to the medical, health and auxiliary staff from the public health units** and their structures. The bonus can also be granted to the specialised staff from the clinical medical and health structures involved in the transport, assessment and diagnosis of COVID-19 patients. The bonus will be granted during the alert and the emergency state. The bonus amounts to **75–85 % of the basic salary** of the above-mentioned staff. For the same period, a bonus for dangerous work conditions will also be granted to the **medical, health and auxiliary staff of the public ambulance units**. In this case, the bonus amounts to **80 % of the basic salary**. Legislation foresees that, in the case of a breach of the legislation by family doctors' employers, the public health insurance units that have a contract with the respective employer can adopt gradual sanctions: for the first breach, a warning; a 5 % reduction in the contract value for the second breach, and a 10 % reduction in the contract value for the third breach²⁸.

²⁵ Romanian Government, 2020, "Ordonanță de Urgență nr. 43 din 6 aprilie 2020". Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/230780>.

²⁶ Romanian Ministry of Health, 2021, "Ordin nr. 1.070/94/2.087/2020". Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/227591>.

²⁷ Romanian Ministry of Health, 2021, "Ordin nr. 1.070/94/2.087/2020". Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/227591>.

²⁸ Romanian Ministry of Health, "Sporul pentru condiții de muncă deosebit de periculoase de care beneficiază personalul de specialitate medico-sanitar și auxiliar sanitar implicat în gestionarea cazurilor Covid-19". Available at: <http://www.ms.ro/2020/11/28/sporul-pentru-conditii-de->

Interviewees pointed out that they are not aware of the adoption of similar incentives and bonuses in other sectors including essential workers, as collective bargaining has been blocked during this period. Interviewees pointed out that workers from the railway transport sector have claimed an increase in wages/bonuses, but negotiations were not carried out during the emergency/alert state.

Another public measure that is worth mentioning refers to the introduction of measures for **preventing employees' burnout in the healthcare sector** among the **criteria for the accreditation** of these health units by the National Authority for the Management of Quality in the Healthcare Sector. Following this measure, the national trade union "Solidaritatea Sanitară" has initiated a **campaign** targeting workers from the healthcare sector to increase **awareness on burnout in the health sector** and to **provide workers** with a **specific tool to assess their risk of burnout**²⁹.

The Romanian NPRR foresees several measures in the healthcare sector. In particular, it foresees significant investments in the development of human resources in the healthcare sector, such as for instance:

- Creation of Sectoral Plans for the Development of Human Resources in the healthcare sector;
- Design of a specific mechanism for the planning of the human resources needed in the healthcare sector;
- Implementation of an effective management of human resources at institutional level and development of the capacities of the departments in charge of human resource management in healthcare units;
- Implementation of an efficient economic and financial management of healthcare units so as to ensure adequate work conditions as well as the training and motivation of the healthcare staff;
- Development and implementation of a coherent system of performance-based reward of the healthcare sector;
- Training of 3,000 healthcare employees on anti-corruption and management of conflicts of interest in the healthcare system;
- Training of 1,000 healthcare managers and of 1,000 people employed in the management of human resources in the healthcare system³⁰.

The NPRR also foresees several interventions focused on the improvement of healthcare equipment and more generally, infrastructural conditions of healthcare units. In addition, it also foresees the development of the e-Health and telemedicine. Furthermore, the NPRR also includes the standardisation and improvement of the Digital Platform of Health Insurances with the aim of improving access to these services and reducing the working time of public staff, thus increasing the efficiency of services provided.

When it comes to social and long-term care, the Romanian NPRR foresees the strengthening and improvement of services in this area (e.g. creation and modernisation of day centres and community services targeted at people with disabilities; creation of day services for the elderly), which is expected to contribute also to the improvement not only of services offered but also of the working conditions

[munca-deosebit-de-periculoase-de-care-beneficiaza-personalul-de-specialitate-medico-sanitar-si-auxiliar-sanitar-implicat-in-gestionarea-cazurilor-covid-19/](#).

²⁹ Evaluation of the professional burnout risk – Burnout Assessment Tool Platform. Available at: <https://baterep.cercetare-sociala.ro/>.

³⁰ Romanian Ministry of EU Investments and Projects, 2021, *National Plan for Recovery and Resilience*. Available at: <https://mfe.gov.ro/pnrr/>.

in this area. Furthermore, the NPRR foresees the employment of around 20,000 previously unemployed domestic/family workers to strengthen and legalise labour force in this area.

Specific legislation to support workers from all sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic were adopted in 2020. They apply to all workers, including the essential ones:

- Law No. 19/2020 (integrated by the provisions of GEO 220/2020, GEO 182/2020) introducing **paid leave for one of the parents if schools are closed due to "extreme situations"** and if the activities performed by the employee cannot be carried out via telework/working from home. The leave is granted only to one parent and only for children up to 12 years old or up to 18 years old for children with disabilities who are attending school, and for children with chronic illnesses and who are at risk in case of physical school attendance. **This right is conditional to the employer's acceptance in certain sectors:** national energy system units, operating units in the nuclear sectors, continuous fire units, health and social care units, telecommunications, public radio and television, rail transport, units that ensure public transport and sanitation of the localities, as well as the supply of gas, electricity, heat and water to the population. During the leave, employees will receive up to 75 % of their base salary, but not more than 75 % of the average gross salary in the economy³¹. Even though no statistics are available on the extent to which essential workers have benefitted from this right, recent research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the healthcare sector shows that 42 % of the surveyed people have not benefitted from this right (Lungu and Ciobanu, 2020). The restriction in the application of the measure to essential workers may have impacted negatively on the conciliation of the personal and private life of employees from these sectors. Access to this right, as defined by the 2020 legislation, was reintroduced in the context of the increase in COVID-19 cases in autumn 2021.
- GEO No. 30/2020 amending GEO No. 158/2005 regarding medical and quarantine leave, and social insurance benefits foresees the **extension of the paid medical and quarantine leave for all employees irrespective of the duration of their contribution** to the health insurance system (previously a worker needed to have at least six months of paid contribution to benefit from medical and quarantine leave). The paid leave amounts to **75 % of the basic salary** and can be granted for **180 days** (compared to the 90 days foreseen before the pandemic). Quarantine leave does not add to the days foreseen by regular medical leave. The quarantine leave was maintained also in autumn 2021, in the context of the increase in COVID-19 cases. In addition to the quarantine medical leave, an **isolation medical leave** is also foreseen by the GEO No. 74/2020³². The GEO also establishes that the gross monthly amount of the quarantine or isolation allowance increases from 75 % to 100 % of the calculation basis³³. However, since August 2021 with the adoption of the GEO No. 74/2021, if employees travel for personal interests in **areas with a high risk of infection**, the **paid quarantine/isolation leave is foreseen only for five days**. The costs of the remaining quarantine days will be sustained by

³¹ Eurofound, 2021, *Free paid days to parents for the purpose of childcare*. Available at: https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/RO-2020-16_414.html?utm_source=externalDashboard&utm_medium=powerbi&utm_campaign=covid-19.

³² Eurofound, 2020, *Extended right to medical leave and allowances for quarantine leave*. Available at: https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/RO-2020-12_767.html?utm_source=externalDashboard&utm_medium=powerbi&utm_campaign=covid-19.

³³ Eurofound, 2020, *New regulations regarding the medical leave and indemnity for quarantined or isolated employees*. Available at: https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/RO-2020-32_1394.html.

the employee³⁴. Furthermore, the legislation adopted in August 2021 also foresees that doctors have to draft a follow plan of the persons to whom a medical leave has been granted. The drafting of the plan is not foreseen for certain diseases (e.g. cancer, AIDS, tuberculosis, hearth diseases).

- Law No. 55/2020 foresees that **employers with more than 50 employees** are obliged to divide workers into groups that **start and end work with at least a one-hour gap**. Until November 2020 this was only a possibility. Working at the same time is to be avoided on large industrial platforms or in office buildings. The measure was reintroduced in autumn 2021 in the context of the increase in COVID-19 cases.
- With the Government Decision No. 599/2020, the Romanian government approved the **National Programme "Digital skills for employees in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises sector"**, which foresees that employees of SMEs from economic sectors with a competitive potential (also including some of the sectors with essential workers) will receive **specific funding for participating in training programmes on digital skills**. The programme is funded by EU funds of EUR 17,000,000, while the national contribution amounts to EUR 3,000,000. The programme, targeting employees, will be complemented with the "National programme for the digitisation of micro, small and medium enterprises", aimed at employers from non-IT sectors who will be able to apply for funding for the digitisation of their activity. The programme is funded with EUR 150,000,000 (85 % funded by EU funds and 15 % by a national contribution).
- GEO No. 37/2021 introduces a **higher flexibility of work regulation in the case of microenterprises** (i.e. companies with fewer than nine employees and an annual turnover or total assets amounting to the RON equivalent of less than EUR 2 million), as they are no longer obliged to sign job descriptions for their employees, which can be expressed verbally with the exception of cases where the written job description is specifically requested by the employee. Furthermore, these organisations are no longer requested to draft internal regulations, following the consultation of the trade union/representative of the employees, containing provisions on the rights and duties of the employer and employee, performance evaluation criteria, health and safety in the workplace, etc. In addition, daily timekeeping is mutually agreed through a written agreement between the employee and employer³⁵. While this measure reduces the burden on the enterprise, it might worsen the work conditions of employees in these organisations.
- Military Ordinance No. 4 of 29 March 2020 allows employers to introduce **preventive isolation at the workplace** for workers occupying essential positions in ensuring the continuity of the production, transport and distribution of electricity and natural gas, the maintenance and preservation of equipment and specific installations, as well as other supply activities, such as the extraction, production and processing of raw materials and/or not entirely processed ones necessary for ensuring the good functioning of the national energy system. During the pandemic, this measure has also been extended to other sectors (e.g. social assistance). As previously mentioned, this measure has impacted negatively on work-life balance³⁶. Preventive

³⁴ Alexandru Boiciuc, 2021, "Concediu carantină: La întoarcerea dintr-o țară cu risc, statul decontează doar cinci zile. CNAS: Restul sunt neplătite". Available at: https://www.avocatnet.ro/articol_58386/Concediu-carantin%C4%83-La-intoarcerea-dintr-o-%C8%9B%C4%83-cu-risc-statul-deconteaz%C4%83-doar-cinci-zile-CNAS-Restul-sunt-nepl%C4%83tite.html.

³⁵ Eurofound, 2021, *Flexibilisation of labour relations for small companies*. Available at: https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/RO-2021-19_1934.html.

³⁶ Code for Romania, 2020, "Stiri oficiale". Available at: <https://stirioficiale.ro/hotarari/ordonanta-militara-nr-4-din-29-03-2020>.

isolation at the workplace was also foreseen in autumn 2021 in the context of the increase in COVID-19 cases.

Specific measures have also been agreed by trade unions and employers.

This is, for instance, the case in the **2020 Protocol between the national trade union organisation Confederatia Nationala a Sindicatelor Cartel Alfa and Confindustria Romania**, representing Italian employers in Romania. The protocol targets employees of companies affiliated to the two organisations and foresees the introduction of a **special private healthcare insurance** that can be used for private health services in case of being infected with COVID-19. Furthermore, the protocol also foresees the adoption of innovative procedures to ensure safety in the workplace³⁷.

A similar **protocol has also been adopted in the banking sector** by the Council of Banking Employers of Romania, and the Federation Banking and Insurance Trade Unions to prevent employees being infected with coronavirus and to ensure continuity of the activity³⁸. As banking workers have not been mentioned by the legislation as workers subject to specific measures due to their relevance for the continuity of services and economic life, the protocol will not be further analysed.

Interviewees also pointed out that **company-level specific measures** have been adopted for ensuring the continuity of the activity: provision of protective equipment (e.g. masks and disinfectant), introduction of separated entrances and exits, introduction of disinfecting filters for cleaning envelopes containing documents (such as bills), procedures for avoiding contact between employees (e.g. commercial agents and transport staff, managers and commercial agents), and online meetings between staff.

Interviewees' opinions on the effectiveness of the measures adopted in Romania to protect essential workers are divergent. Some of the interviewees considered that the measures adopted in the health and social care sectors have been effective, while others do recognise their effectiveness, but maintain that they should be complemented with other measures:

- adoption of specific measures to ensure employees' psychological well-being;
- enhancing lifelong training – introducing a strategic planning system of healthcare units that should be based on the demographic characteristics of the population, the needs of the healthcare system and digitisation in this sector, and the causes of mortality;
- improving the management of healthcare staff so that wages are related to performance and differentiated based on the activity sector;
- the planning of staff based on the services delivered and not the number of beds available.

Interviewees agree that measures adopted in the other essential sectors have been largely insufficient and the critical features of the labour market that were present before the COVID-19 pandemic still persist.

The main measures pointed out by interviewees that could improve the situation of Romanian workers, including essential workers are:

- Revise the social dialogue law and promote a real involvement of trade unions in defining labour market policies. Interviewees pointed out that specific attention should also be paid to

³⁷ Eurofound, 2020, *Overview of measures by country: Romania*. Available at: <https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/countries/RO.html>.

³⁸ Eurofound, 2020, *Overview of measures by country: Romania*. Available at: <https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/countries/RO.html>.

establishing an effective dialogue between all actors involved in labour market policies (trade unions, employers' unions, civil society).

- Increase the minimum wage and adopt specific measures to fight in-work poverty.
- Support the creation of decent and qualitative jobs.
- Improve the respecting of safety measures in the workplace. Interviewees pointed out that public institutions should act as a good example in this area.
- Ensure sufficient resources for the upskilling of Romanian workers, especially in the context of the transition to the green economy, and adopt a collaborative approach to defining upskilling policies to ensure their effective implementation on the ground.
- Adopt specific measures to encourage workforce retention, especially in sectors suffering most from a shortage in labour force.
- Enhance the digitisation of the public administration and enhance the development of public and private employees' digital skills.
- Invest in innovating the social infrastructure and equipment to improve both working conditions and quality of the services offered.
- Foresee trade unions and employers' unions among beneficiaries of EU funds so they can take further measures to improve workers' labour market conditions and qualifications.

Many of these measures are foreseen by the Romanian NPRR. This is the case of the modernisation of social infrastructure and equipment in healthcare, and social and long-term care, as previously mentioned. Furthermore, an improvement in the infrastructure and equipment is also foreseen in the education sector (e.g. improvement in the equipment of veterinary and agricultural schools, digitisation of schools, modernisation of IT equipment and of science laboratories equipment).

The digitisation of public administration and the development of the digital skills of public staff and citizens has a relevant role in the Romanian NPRR. A specific component of the NPRR (i.e. digital transformation) is dedicated to the digitisation of public and private organisations, including civil society organisations (e.g. digitisation of the judicial, labour and social protection and environment fields; adoption of e-procurement; adoption digital signatures; digitisation of civil society; building advanced digital competences of public staff). The NPRR dedicates 6 % of the overall budget to the digital transformation of Romanian society. Within this priority, an upskilling of workers and adaptation of their competences to the digital economy is also foreseen through specific schemes dedicated to the upskilling/requalification of employees of firms.

When it comes to measures for the encouragement of workforce retention in sectors experiencing staff shortages (e.g. healthcare), the NPRR foresees the creation of 1,104 apartments for professionals in the healthcare and education sectors in the areas that are experiencing an insufficient number of professionals in these fields.

The NPRR also tackles the issue of adequate wages limited to the public sector, by foreseeing the development of an equitable and unitary wage system in public administration, correlated to performance and sustainable over time. It also deals with minimum wage, by foreseeing the development of the legal framework for the definition of a minimum wage.

Moreover, the NPRR also foresees the update of the legal framework of social dialogue and the strengthening of the institutional capacity of social partners (e.g. trade unions) as well as the digitisation of their organisations.

Even though labour market policies and policies regarding essential sectors are a competency of Member States, interviewees revealed that the EU could further support the improvement in the labour market situation in Romania through the following:

- Enhancing measures to support the reduction of development disparities between Eastern and Western Europe. According to interviewees, as long as we have relevant differences in economic and social development between Eastern and Western Europe, the increased migration of the qualified workforce will continue to be an issue.
- Coordinating labour market policies to prevent imbalances in the labour market in the EU Member States. One of the interviewees recalls that during phase I of the pandemic situation, when the demand for workers in the health and social care was high, a number of social assistance workers were recruited by Austrian companies who could travel abroad despite the travel restrictions in Romania, following an agreement between the Austrian Ministry of European Affairs and the Romanian Ministry for Transport³⁹. The same situation also occurred in other sectors, such as in the agricultural sector. For instance, over 2,000 Romanian workers left for temporary work in agriculture in Germany. Romanian workers leaving to work in the agricultural sector often have no qualifications, or a low level of qualifications and come from Romanian villages. In the case of agricultural workers leaving for Germany, no specific agreement was signed between the governments of the two countries⁴⁰. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the Romanian government introduced a change to the Military Ordinance No. 7/ April 2020 foreseeing that Romanian workers could travel abroad for temporary work using chartered flights upon the authorisation of competent authorities from both the destination and the origin country⁴¹. According to Romanian media reports, in some cases, workers had an authorization to leave the quarantine area signed by the mayor of the respective place⁴². These situations create an imbalance of EU policies in the labour market. Thus, a coordination of EU policies is needed to prevent such situations.
- Defining a common framework on labour regulation in multinational companies in order to ensure fair recruitment practices, fair wages, the respect of safety at work procedures and all labour market rights. Interviews underlined that Romanian trade unions face enormous difficulties in representing workers employed in online platforms and, more generally in the ICT sector due to the restrictive provisions foreseen by Romanian law on social dialogue.

³⁹ Ziarul Romanesc, 2020, "Coridor feroviar România-Austria: Viena cere ca primul tren cu muncitori români să plece cel târziu pe 9 mai". Available at: <https://ziarulromanesc.at/coridor-feroviar-romania-austria-viena-cere-ca-primul-tren-cu-muncitori-romani-sa-plece-cel-tarziu-pe-9-mai/>; Aradon, 2020, "Sute de români ar urma să plece, cu un tren special, să îngrijească bătrâni în Austria". Available at: <https://www.aradon.ro/aradon-stirile-judetului-arad/sute-de-romani-ar-urma-sa-plece-cu-un-tren-special-sa-ingrijeasca-batrani-in-austria-1223435/>; Tatiana Beliuța, 2020, "În timp ce bătrânii noștri rămân singuri, sute de îngrijitori români vor pleca săptămânal la muncă în Austria". Available at: <https://alephnews.ro/lifestyle/in-timp-ce-batrani-nostri-raman-singuri-sute-de-ingrijitori-romani-vor-pleca-saptamanal-la-munca-in-austria/>.

⁴⁰ DIGI24, 2020, "CTP, despre oamenii din Suceava, înghesuiți la Cluj: Începusem să îmi fac probleme cu "dictatura militară", uitând că suntem în România". Available at: <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/sanatate/ctp-despre-oamenii-din-suceava-inghesuiti-la-cluj-incepusem-sa-imi-fac-probleme-cu-dictatura-militara-uitand-ca-suntem-in-romania-1290118>.

⁴¹ Ministry of Internal Affairs, "Ordonanță Militară nr. 8 din 9 aprilie 2020". Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/224762#A197>.

⁴² DIGI24, 2020, "CTP, despre oamenii din Suceava, înghesuiți la Cluj: Începusem să îmi fac probleme cu "dictatura militară", uitând că suntem în România". Available at: <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/sanatate/ctp-despre-oamenii-din-suceava-inghesuiti-la-cluj-incepusem-sa-imi-fac-probleme-cu-dictatura-militara-uitand-ca-suntem-in-romania-1290118>.

Furthermore, often such workers have contracts directly with the companies abroad, which makes ensuring their rights even more difficult.

- Enhancing the respect of the partnership principle (i.e. active and meaningful engagement of stakeholders as well as other actors in the design and delivery of public policies) in practice. Interviewees pointed out that EU institutions should take further action to make sure that the partnership principle (i.e. *"close cooperation between public authorities, economic and social partners and bodies representing civil society at national, regional and local levels throughout the whole programme cycle consisting of preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation"*⁴³) in the definition and implementation of labour market policies, including also in the framework of Cohesion policy, is implemented effectively on the ground in Romania.

⁴³ European Commission, 2014, *COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds*. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014R0240&PDF>.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY INDICATIONS

No legal definition of essential workers has been provided in Romania before or during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Labour Market Code foresees that "continuous fire" units may exist and defines them as sectors/activities where production cannot stop. Even though during the communist period these sectors were specifically identified, the legislation was abolished in 2006 and currently no specific classification of continuous fire units exists. The phrase "essential" workers has been officially used only in the context of the vaccination campaign when a group of essential workers were identified as a priority category: public administration staff at various levels; staff from vital economic sectors; staff from other sectors. However, essential workers were only entitled to vaccinations.

Even though the term essential workers is not used, the Romanian legislation adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic identifies it as particularly relevant for ensuring the continuity of the economic and social system workers from the following sectors: the production, transport and distribution of electricity and natural gas and the supply, extraction, production and processing of resources and raw and/or half-processed materials needed for their functioning; operational units in the nuclear sector; care and maintenance of specific installations and equipment; public order; national security; healthcare; emergency units; local public administration; social care and protection; judiciary; public utility services; telecommunications; transport; continuous fire units; waste and cleaning management; heat production and distribution; fuel production and distribution.

The diverse nature of these workers combined with limited data on the specific workers considered essential within the above-mentioned sectors, makes it difficult to provide a detailed coherent picture of their demographic characteristics and working conditions. However, a partial image of these workers can be provided based on available data. Most of the people employed in these sectors are active in the agricultural, manufacturing and trade sectors. In all the 'essential' sectors, men are the majority of the employed people with the exception of health and social care and trade, where the majority of workers are women. The majority of workers in essential sectors are employees, with the exception of employed people from agriculture who are mostly self-employed or contributing family workers⁴⁴.

When it comes to working conditions, problems faced by the workers in the essential sectors are common to all fields of work in Romania: shortage of workforce, in particular qualified people; low wages and gender wage gaps; poor working conditions (e.g. low flexibility, obsolete infrastructure and outdated technology; limited attention to safety at work); limited participation in lifelong training programmes and limited social dialogue.

The impact of COVID-19 on Romanian employment, including the essential sectors, has been limited. Overall employment declined by 2 % in 2020 compared to 2019, while in the essential sectors the highest percentages of reduction were registered in the agricultural (–5 %) and manufacturing sectors (–7 %). In several essential sectors (transport and storage, trade, water distribution; sanitation, waste management, decontamination activities, production and distribution of electric and thermal energy, gas and warm water and air conditioning, and health and social work) the impact of COVID-19 on the gender situation in the labour market is different not only from one sector to another, but also within the same sector. For instance, in the case of manufacturing the reduction in overall female employment was accompanied by an increase of self-employed people.

While the impact of COVID-19 on the employment level was limited, it impacted more on the duration of the working week (–4 % in 2020 compared to 2019). The reduction in the duration of the working

⁴⁴ Contributing family workers are persons who carry out their activity within a family business run by a family member or relative, not receiving remuneration as salary or pay in kind. Available at: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>.

week in essential sectors varied between –2 % and –4 %. Furthermore, according to interviewees, it was also different within the same sector (e.g. social and healthcare sector) based on their duties. The example of social assistance workers is a classic example: in residential care centres, social assistance workers continued their work and were subject to preventive isolation measures, while in the day centres, social assistance workers had to stop their activity. The reduction in the duration of the working week also resulted in a reduction in wages. However, interviewees revealed that the limited duration of the emergency state (around a month and a half) allowed many businesses to continue their activity and hence to reduce their loss in earnings.

Besides a reduction in earnings in the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, other negative effects of the pandemic include: reduced psychological well-being due to the fear of becoming sick, and stressful working conditions; pressure to adapt to the new situation and maintain business; uncertainty of procedures to be implemented and respected; limited work-life balance, and an increase in violence against women. According to interviewees, problems characterising the Romanian labour market add to these.

The COVID-19 pandemic also had some positive effects: an increase in the awareness of the need to improve infrastructure and update work equipment, and planning of specific measures in the context of the NPRR; increase in awareness of the impact of the shortage of specific categories of medical staff (e.g. community nurses); and an increase in the wages of civil servants (medical and non-medical) from the public healthcare sector.

Several measures were adopted to support essential workers, concentrated mainly in the health and social care sectors. Such measures consisted mainly of staff wage increases in the health and social care fields through an increase in the basic salary and the adoption of several risk incentives.

The Romanian authorities have also adopted other pieces of legislation that supported workers from all sectors, also including the essential ones: paid leave for one of the parents if schools are closed due to "extreme situations" (restricted access for essential workers); extension of the paid medical and quarantine leave for all employees, irrespective of the duration of their contribution; staggered work; increase in employees' digital skills. The Romanian authorities have also adopted legislation that could have a negative effect on essential workers' employment conditions: strengthening of work flexibility in the case of microenterprises, and preventive isolation in the workplace.

Other measures were adopted by unions, through specific protocols with workers' unions, and companies.

Interviewees positively assessed financial measures adopted in the healthcare sector and maintained that these should be extended to other sectors as well. However, they considered them largely insufficient to deal with the structural problems faced by the Romanian labour market. According to the interviewees, measures adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic should be complemented with measures focusing on:

- an increase in minimum wages and reduction in in-work poverty;
- an increase in lifelong training programmes and participation;
- an improvement in the offer and quality of jobs;
- a reduction in labour shortages, especially in the sectors most affected, particularly through measures to encourage the retention of the Romanian workforce;
- innovation of infrastructure and technology;
- an increase in workers' digital skills and digitisation of businesses;

- revision of the social dialogue law;
- psychological support (especially for workers in health and social care sectors).

The Romanian NPRR tackles many of the measures suggested by the interviewees.

Interviewees also revealed that the EU should intervene more to further support a reduction in differences in social and economic development between Eastern and Western Europe, to coordinate labour policies to avoid imbalances in the labour market due to workforce drain, to define a common framework for regulating labour in multinational companies, and to require that Romanian authorities respect social dialogue.

REFERENCES

- Aradon, 2020, "Sute de români ar urma să plece, cu un tren special, să îngrijească bătrâni în Austria". Available at: <https://www.aradon.ro/aradon-stirile-judetului-arad/sute-de-romani-ar-urma-sa-plece-cu-un-tren-special-sa-ingrijeasca-batrani-in-austria-1223435/>.
- Beliuța, T., 2020, "În timp ce bătrânii noștri rămân singuri, sute de îngrijitori români vor pleca săptămânal la muncă în Austria". Available at: <https://alephnews.ro/lifestyle/in-timp-ce-batranii-nostri-raman-singuri-sute-de-ingrijitori-romani-vor-pleca-saptamanal-la-munca-in-austria/>.
- Boboc, C. et al., 2020, *Efectele pandemiei SARS COV 2 asupra ocupării. Rolul politicilor publice și reziliența pieței muncii în contextul adaptării mediului de afaceri (Effects of the SARS COV 2 on employment. The role of public policies and the resilience of the labour market in the context of the adaptation of businesses)*, Publication for the National Institute of Economics of the Romanian Academy. Available at: https://acad.ro/SARS-CoV-2/doc/d19-Efectele_pandemiei_asupra_ocuparii.pdf.
- Boiciuc, A., 2021, "Concediu carantină: La întoarcerea dintr-o țară cu risc, statul decontează doar cinci zile. CNAS: Restul sunt neplătite". Available at: https://www.avocatnet.ro/articol_58386/Concediu-carantin%C4%83-La-intoarcerea-dintr-o-%C8%9B%C4%83-cu-risc-statul-deconteaz%C4%83-doar-cinci-zile-CNAS-Restul-sunt-nepl%C4%83tite.html.
- Barbuta, F., 2021, "Salariul minim 2021, în Monitorul oficial. Nu se aplică de la 1 ianuarie, că așa a fost scris actul. Cornel Grama: Dacă sunt patroni care vor să respecte legea la virgulă, vor mări din 13 ianuarie". Available at: https://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-finante_banci-24538860-salariul-minim-2021-monitorul-oficial-cornel-grama-patroni-respecte-legea-vor-mari-din-13-ianuarie.htm.
- Chici, C., 2021, "Am povestit cu 7 lucrători esențiali, aflați în linia întâi, despre ce a însemnat adaptarea în pandemie pentru ei". Available at: <https://www.clujlife.com/2021/02/24/am-povestit-cu-7-lucratori-esentiali-aflati-in-linia-intai-despre-ce-a-insemnat-adaptarea-in-pandemie-pentru-ei/>.
- Code for Romania, 2020, "Stiri oficiale". Available at: <https://stirioficiale.ro/hotarari/ordonanta-militara-nr-4-din-29-03-2020>.
- DIGI24, 2020, "CTP, despre oamenii din Suceava, înghesuiți la Cluj: Începusem să îmi fac probleme cu "dictatura militară", uitând că suntem în România". Available at: <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/sanatate/ctp-despre-oamenii-din-suceava-inghesuiti-la-cluj-incepusem-sa-imi-fac-probleme-cu-dictatura-militara-uitand-ca-suntem-in-romania-1290118>.
- Eurofound, 2021, *Living and working in Romania*. Available at: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ro/country/romania>.
- Eurofound, 2021, *Temporary substantial salary increases for public health staff in the pandemic conditions*. Available at: https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/RO-2020-33_1393.html.
- Eurofound, 2021, *Free paid days to parents for the purpose of childcare*. Available at: https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/RO-2020-16_414.html?utm_source=externalDashboard&utm_medium=powerbi&utm_campaign=covid-19.
- Eurofound, 2021, *Flexibilisation of labour relations for small companies*. Available at: https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/RO-2021-19_1934.html.

- Eurofound, 2020, *Extended right to medical leave and allowances for quarantine leave*. Available at: https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/RO-2020-12_767.html?utm_source=externalDashboard&utm_medium=powerbi&utm_campaign=covid-19.
- Eurofound, 2020, *New regulations regarding the medical leave and indemnity for quarantined or isolated employees*. Available at: https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/RO-2020-32_1394.html.
- Eurofound, 2020, *Living, working and COVID-19, COVID-19 series*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Available at: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2020/living-working-and-COVID-19>.
- Eurofound, 2020, *Overview of measures by country: Romania*. Available at: <https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/countries/RO.html>.
- European Commission, 2020, *Commission staff working document Country Report Romania 2020 Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Central Bank and the Eurogroup 2020 European Semester: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011 SWD/2020/522 final*. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1584543810241&uri=CELEX%3A52020SC0522>.
- EUROSTAT, 2021, *Disparities in minimum wages across the EU*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20210205-1>.
- EUROSTAT, 2021, *In work at-risk-of-poverty rate*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_01_41/default/table?lang=en.
- EUROSTAT, 2021, *Persons in employment by working time flexibility, economic activity (NACE Rev. 2) and occupation*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/LFSO_19FXWT03_custom_1341649/default/table?lang=en.
- EUROSTAT, 2021, *Average number of actual weekly hours of work in main job, by sex, professional status, full-time/part-time and economic activity (from 2008 onwards, NACE Rev. 2) – hours*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfsq_ewhan2/default/table?lang=en.
- EUROSTAT, 2021, *Persons in employment by level of difficulty to take one or two hours off at short notice, economic activity (NACE Rev. 2) and occupation*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfs_19fxwt06/default/table?lang=en.
- Florea, A., 2021, "Zeci de mii de muncitori străini din România au dreptul să se vaccineze, dar nu știu asta. Autoritățile nu comunică în engleză. Imigrările: "Nu avem astfel de responsabilități." Available at: <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/muncitori-straini-vaccinare-autoritati-nu-comunica-engleza-3455972>.
- Hotnews, 2020, "Coșul minim pentru un trai decent, actualizat pentru anul 2020. Cea mai mare creștere a cheltuielilor a fost la capitolul locuință". Available at: https://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-finante_banci-24428459-cosul-minim-pentru-trai-decent-actualizat-pentru-anul-2020-cea-mai-mare-crestere-cheltuielilor-fost-capitolul-locuinta.htm.

- Institutul National de Statistica, 2020, "*Locuri de munca vacante*". Available at: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>.
- InvestRomania, 2020, *Wages&salaries*. Available at: <http://investromania.gov.ro/web/why-invest/wages-salaries/>.
- Legislatia muncii, "*Prevederile legale referitoare la unitatile cu foc continuu*". Available at: <https://legislatiamuncii.manager.ro/a/9583/prevederile-legale-referitoare-la-unitatile-cu-foc-continuu.html>.
- Lungu, L. and Ciobanu G., 2020, *Evaluarea impactului pandemiei COVID-19 asupra lucrătorilor din sănătate (Evaluation of the COVID-19 impact on workers in the health sector)*. Available at: <https://COVID-19.solidaritatea-sanitara.ro/studii/studiul-evaluarea-impactului-pandemiei-COVID-19-asupra-lucratorilor-din-sanatate/>.
- Ministry of European Investments and Projects, 2021, *National Plan for Recovery and Resilience of Romania*. Available at: <https://mfe.gov.ro/pnrr/>.
- Ministry of Health, 2020, *Order No. 1.070/94/2.087/2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/227591>.
- Ministry of Health, "*Sporul pentru condiții de muncă deosebit de periculoase de care beneficiază personalul de specialitate medico-sanitar și auxiliar sanitar implicat în gestionarea cazurilor Covid-19*". Available at: <http://www.ms.ro/2020/11/28/sporul-pentru-conditii-de-munca-deosebit-de-periculoase-de-care-beneficiaza-personalul-de-specialitate-medico-sanitar-si-auxiliar-sanitar-implicat-in-gestionarea-cazurilor-covid-19/>.
- Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2020, *Military ordinance No. 4/29th March 2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/224467>.
- Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2020, *Military ordinance No. 6/2020*. Available at: <https://isujiis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Ordonanta-militara-nr.-6-2020-masuri-carantinare-Suceava.pdf>.
- Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2020, *Military ordinance No. 46/30th March 2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/224493>.
- Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2020, *Military ordinance No. 4/29th of March 2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/224467>.
- Ministry of Internal Affairs, *Military Ordinance No. 8/April 2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/224762#A197>.
- National Committee for Emergency Situations, 2020, *Decision No. 24/14th of May 2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/225602>.
- President of Romania, 2020, *Decree 195/16th of March 2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/223831>.
- Romanian Government, 2021, *Annex to GEO No. 101/8th of November 2021*. Available at: <https://gov.ro/ro/masuri>.
- Romanian Government, 2021, *Decision No. 105/19th of November 2021*. Available at: <https://gov.ro/ro/masuri>.

- Romanian Government, 2021, *Decision No. 76/30th of September 2021*. Available at: <https://gov.ro/ro/masuri>.
- Romanian Government, 2021, *Decision No. 91/22nd of October 2021*. Available at: <https://gov.ro/ro/masuri>.
- Romanian Government, 2021, *GEO No. 74/2021*. Available at: <https://lege5.ro/gratuit/haydsnjsgi3a/ordonanta-de-urgenta-nr-74-2021-pentru-modificarea-si-completarea-ordonantei-de-urgenta-a-guvernului-nr-158-2005-privind-concediile-si-indemnizatiile-de-asigurari-sociale-de-sanatate-pentru-modificare>.
- Romanian Government, 2021, *GEO No. 37/2021*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/242069>.
- Romanian Government, 2020, *GEO No. 131/2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/229025>.
- Romanian Government, 2020, *GEO No. 43/2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/224714>.
- Romanian Government, 2020, *GEO No. 220/2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/235841>.
- Romanian Government, 2020, *GEO No. 182/2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/231772>.
- Romanian Government, 2020, *GEO No. 126/2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/228626>.
- Romanian Government, 2020, *GEO No. 30/2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/224272>.
- Romanian Government, 2005, *GEO No. 158/2005*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/66305>.
- Romanian Government, 2020, *Government Resolution No. 1035/2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/234215>.
- Romanian Government, 2020, *Government Decision No. 599/2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/228658>.
- Romanian Government, 2020, *GEO No. 43/2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/230780>.
- Romanian National Institute of Statistics, 2020, *Social statistics*. Available at: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>.
- Romanian Parliament, 2020, *Law No. 19/14th of March 2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/223814>.
- Romanian Parliament, 2020, *Law No. 55/2020*. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/225620>.
- Stanciu, M., Mihăilescu, A., Humă, C., 2020, *Stare de urgență pentru consumul populației (The emergency state of the population's consumption)*, Study for the Romanian Research Institute of Life Quality. Available at: <https://uefiscdi.gov.ro/resource-829423-2020-raport-social-stare-de-urgenta-pentru-consumul-populatiei-m.pdf>.

- Vasile, V., Boboc, C. and Ghiță, S., 2020, *Industrial relations and social dialogue Romania: Working life in the COVID-19 pandemic 2020*. Available at: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/wpef21029.pdf>.
- Vasilescu C., 2018, *The Geography of New Employment Dynamics in Europe. Case Study - North East RO*, Study for ESPON EGTC. Available at: https://www.espon.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/10.%20ESPON_EMPLOY_Case%20Study%20-%20NORTH%20EAST%20%28RO%29.pdf.
- Vasilescu, C., 2019, *Social and employment policies in Romania*, Publication for the committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies, European Parliament, Luxembourg. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/626064/IPOL_STU\(2018\)626064_ENOpdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/626064/IPOL_STU(2018)626064_ENOpdf).
- Vasilescu, C., 2019, *Labour mobility and recognition in the regulated professions*, Publication for the committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies, European Parliament, Luxembourg. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/631056/IPOL_STU\(2019\)631056\(ANN03\)_ENOpdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/631056/IPOL_STU(2019)631056(ANN03)_ENOpdf).
- Vasilescu C., 2019, *Potential of work-based learning in developing upskilling pathways for adults, Case study Romania* (not published), Study for CEDEFOP.
- Ziarul Romanesc, 2020, "Coridor feroviar România-Austria: Viena cere ca primul tren cu muncitori români să plece cel târziu pe 9 mai". Available at: <https://ziarulromanesc.at/coridor-feroviar-romania-austria-viena-cere-ca-primul-tren-cu-muncitori-romani-sa-plece-cel-tarziu-pe-9-mai>.

ANNEXES

Annex I – Stakeholder Interviews

Position	Organisation	Date of interview
Frontline worker – trade agent	Company active in the food distribution and commercialisation	19.09.2021
Confederation secretary – Social Department	Împreună pentru Viitor. Confederația Națională a Sindicatelor Libere din România (CNSLR-FRATIA)	17.09.2021
Manager of the international department	Împreună pentru Viitor. Confederația Națională a Sindicatelor Libere din România (CNSLR-FRATIA)	17.09.2021
President & Co-founder	Health Management and Policy Centre	24.09.2021

Annex II – Additional Tables

Table 2: Average monthly nominal gross earnings by economic activity at level of CANE Rev.2

CANE Rev.2 (economic activities)	Year		Δ 2020 2019
	Year 2019	Year 2020	
	MU: RON		
	RON	RON	
TOTAL	4,853	5,213	7 %
A AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHING	3,773	4,002	6 %
01 Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities	3,636	3,846	6 %
INDUSTRY	4,406	4,701	7 %
B MINING AND QUARRYING	6,957	7,352	6 %
C MANUFACTURING	4,211	4,462	6 %
10 Manufacture of food products	3,370	3,600	7 %
33 Repair and installation of machinery and equipment	4,304	4,493	4 %
D ELECTRICITY, GAS, STEAM AND AIR CONDITIONING SUPPLY	7,240	8,060	11 %
E WATER SUPPLY; SEWERAGE, WASTE MANAGEMENT AND REMEDIATION ACTIVITIES	4,014	4,375	9 %
G WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE; REPAIR OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND MOTORCYCLES	3,944	4,318	9 %
H TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE	4,537	4,804	6 %
J INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION	9,012	9,863	9 %
61 Telecommunications	6,652	7,083	6 %
O PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEFENCE; COMPULSORY SOCIAL SECURITY	8,234	8,679	5 %
Q HUMAN HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK ACTIVITIES	6,230	6,687	7 %

Source: Romanian National Institute of Statistics.

Available at: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>.

Table 3: Average monthly nominal gross earnings by economic activity at level of CANE Rev.2 and gender

CANE Rev.2 (economic activities)	Sex	Year				
		Year 2008	Year 2019	Year 2020	Δ 2020 2019	% of men s earnings: 2020
		MU: Lei, lei RON (from 2005)				
		RON	RON	RON		
TOTAL	Total	1,761	4,853	5,213	-	-
	Male	1,814	4,909	5,244	7 %	
	Female	1,700	4,791	5,179	8 %	99 %
A AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHING	Total	1,205	3,773	4,002	6 %	
	Male	1,210	3,802	4,006	5 %	
	Female	1,192	3,678	3,988	8 %	100 %
01 Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities	Total	1,131	3,636	3,846	6 %	
	Male	1,122	3,647	3,824	5 %	
	Female	1,151	3,607	3,906	8 %	102 %
INDUSTRY	Total	1,582	4,406	4,701	7 %	
	Male	1,799	4,831	5,142	6 %	
	Female	1,301	3,859	4,119	7 %	80%
B MINING AND QUARRYING	Total	3,107	6,957	7,352	6 %	
	Male	3,098	6,816	7,205	6 %	
	Female	3,160	7,670	8,174	7 %	113 %
C MANUFACTURING	Total	1,389	4,211	4,462	6 %	
	Male	1,563	4,647	4,901	5 %	
	Female	1,198	3,725	3,960	6 %	81 %
10 Manufacture of food products	Total	1,176	3,370	3,600	7 %	
	Male	1,267	3,688	3,937	7 %	
	Female	1,099	3,124	3,341	7 %	85 %
D ELECTRICITY, GAS, STEAM AND AIR CONDITIONING SUPPLY	Total	3,262	7,240	8,060	11 %	
	Male	3,322	7,311	8,112	11 %	
	Female	3,088	7,020	7,896	12 %	97 %
E WATER SUPPLY; SEWERAGE, WASTE MANAGEMENT AND REMEDIATION ACTIVITIES	Total	1,532	4,014	4,375	9 %	
	Male	1,547	4,008	4,389	10 %	
	Female	1,493	4,031	4,334	8 %	99 %
G WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE; REPAIR OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND MOTORCYCLES	Total	1,400	3,944	4,318	9 %	
	Male	1,519	4,345	4,689	8 %	
	Female	1,277	3,586	3,982	11 %	85 %

H TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE	Total	1,964	4,537	4,804	6 %	
	Male	1,967	4,491	4,767	6 %	
	Female	1,955	4,689	4,928	5 %	103 %
J INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION	Total	2,890	9,012	9,863	9 %	
	Male	2,953	9,696	10,707	10 %	
	Female	2,790	7,962	8,602	8 %	80 %
61 Telecommunications	Total	3,331	6,652	7,083	6 %	
	Male	3,175	6,888	7,380	7 %	
	Female	3,625	6,212	6,523	5 %	88 %
O PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEFENCE; COMPULSORY SOCIAL SECURITY	Total	3,269	8,234	8,679	5 %	
	Male	3,038	7,921	8,327	5 %	
	Female	3,458	8,456	8,927	6 %	107 %
Q HUMAN HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK ACTIVITIES	Total	1,702	6,230	6,687	7 %	
	Male	1,850	6,656	7,159	8 %	
	Female	1,665	6,123	6,565	7 %	92 %

Source: Romanian National Institute of Statistics.

Available at: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>.

Table 4: Employment by activity of the national economy, by status in employment and by sex

CANE activity of national economy sections	Status in employment	Sex	Period			
			Quarter IV 2019	Quarter IV 2020		
			MU: Persons			
			Number of persons	Number of persons		
Total	Total	Total	8,653,711	8,504,666	-2 %	
	-	Male	4,962,659	4,903,022	-1 %	
	-	Female	3,691,052	3,601,644	-2 %	
	Employee	Total	6,586,440	6,519,421	-1 %	77 %
	-	Male	3,695,515	3,685,369	0 %	
	-	Female	2,890,925	2,834,053	-2 %	
	Employer	Total	110,877	97,981	-12 %	1 %
	-	Male	85,484	76,522	-10 %	
	-	Female	25,393	21,460	-15 %	
	Self-employed	Total	1,340,147	1,301,561	-3 %	15 %
	-	Male	979,618	942,625	-4 %	
	-	Female	360,528	358,937	0 %	
	Contributing family worker	Total	614,654	584,315	-5 %	7 %
	-	Male	201,623	197,606	-2 %	
	-	Female	413,031	386,708	-6 %	
	Member of an agricultural holding or of a cooperative	Total	1,594	1,387	-13 %	0,02 %
	-	Male	419	900	115 %	
	-	Female	1,175	487	-59 %	
Agriculture, forestry, fish farming - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	1,784,559	1,687,336	-5 %	20 %
	-	Male	1,045,537	995,821	-5 %	
	-	Female	739,023	691,515	-6 %	
	Employee	Total	208,777	205,602	-2 %	
	-	Male	166,970	168,715	1 %	
	-	Female	41,806	36,887	-12 %	
	Employer	Total	11,238	10,060	-10 %	
	-	Male	10,615	9,711	-9 %	
	-	Female	623	349	-44 %	
	Self-employed	Total	959,617	896,757	-7 %	

	-	Male	674,523	626,817	-7 %	
	-	Female	285,094	269,940	-5 %	
	Contributing family worker	Total	604,214	573,680	-5 %	
	-	Male	193,009	189,828	-2 %	
	-	Female	411,206	383,852	-7 %	
	Member of an agricultural holding or of a cooperative	Total	714	1,237	73 %	
	-	Male	419	751	79 %	
	-	Female	295	487	65 %	
Mining and quarrying - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	59,508	59,055	-1 %	1 %
	-	Male	51,570	50,125	-3 %	
	-	Female	7,939	8,930	12 %	
	Employee	Total	59,508	58,568	-2 %	
	-	Male	51,570	49,638	-4 %	
	-	Female	7,939	8,930	12 %	
	Self-employed	Total	:	487		
	-	Male	:	487		
Manufacturing- CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	1,632,109	1,524,073	-7 %	18 %
	-	Male	939,794	874,070	-7 %	
	-	Female	692,315	650,002	-6 %	
	Employee	Total	1,595,455	1,484,475	-7 %	
	-	Male	910,303	846,868	-7 %	
	-	Female	685,152	637,607	-7 %	
	Employer	Total	8,511	9,129	7 %	
	-	Male	7,229	7,743	7 %	
	-	Female	1,281	1,386	8 %	
	Self-employed	Total	25,103	28,425	13 %	
	-	Male	19,221	17,982	-6 %	
	-	Female	5,881	10,443	78 %	
	Contributing family worker	Total	3,041	2,044	-33 %	
	-	Male	3,041	1,477	-51 %	
	-	Female	:	567		
Production and distribution of electric and thermal energy, gas and warm water	Total	Total	73,097	74,233	2 %	1 %
	-	Male	63,017	59,987	-5 %	
	-	Female	10,080	14,246	41 %	
	Employee	Total	73,097	74,233	2 %	

and air conditioning - CANE Rev.2	-	Male	63,017	59,987	-5 %	
	-	Female	10,080	14,246	41 %	
Water distribution; sanitation, waste management, decontamination activities - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	113,004	116,139	3 %	1 %
	-	Male	86,536	90,916	5 %	
	-	Female	26,469	25,223	-5 %	
	Employee	Total	106,600	98,637	-7 %	
	-	Male	80,951	78,200	-3 %	
	-	Female	25,649	20,437	-20 %	
	Employer	Total	:	678	-	
	-	Male	:	678	-	
	Self-employed	Total	4,969	14,052	183 %	
	-	Male	4,150	9,534	130 %	
	-	Female	819	4,517	452 %	
	Contributing family worker	Total	1,435	2,772	93 %	
	-	Male	1,435	2,504	74 %	
	-	Female	:	269		
Trade - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	1,313,211	1,367,275	4 %	16 %
	-	Male	596,621	613,847	3 %	
	-	Female	716,591	753,428	5 %	
	Employee	Total	1,209,719	1,268,657	5 %	
	-	Male	522,065	545,194	4 %	
	-	Female	687,654	723,463	5 %	
	Employer	Total	49,876	47,806	-4 %	
	-	Male	35,365	33,589	-5 %	
	-	Female	14,511	14,217	-2 %	
	Self-employed	Total	49,716	47,172	-5 %	
	-	Male	36,866	32,204	-13 %	
	-	Female	12,850	14,968	16 %	
	Contributing family worker	Total	3,291	3,640	11 %	
	-	Male	2,325	2,861	23 %	
	-	Female	965	779	-19 %	
	Member of an agricultural holding or of a cooperative	Total	610	:	-	
	-	Female	610	:	-	
Transport and storage- CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	507,486	546,969	8 %	6 %
	-	Male	451,924	480,348	6 %	

	-	Female	55,562	66,621	20 %	
	Employee	Total	474,506	501,814	6 %	
	-	Male	420,049	435,742	4 %	
	-	Female	54,457	66,073	21 %	
	Employer	Total	5,778	8,735	51 %	
	-	Male	5,091	8,383	65 %	
	-	Female	687	352	-49 %	
	Self-employed	Total	27,202	35,747	31 %	
	-	Male	26,784	35,550	33 %	
	-	Female	417	197	-53 %	
	Contributing family worker	Total	:	673	-	
	-	Male	:	673	-	
Information and communications - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	171,635	216,648	26 %	3 %
	-	Male	115,175	138,283	20 %	
	-	Female	56,460	78,364	39 %	
	Employee	Total	166,067	209,073	26 %	
	-	Male	110,422	132,079	20 %	
	-	Female	55,645	76,994	38 %	
	Employer	Total	1,657	1,096	-34 %	
	-	Male	1,657	1,096	-34 %	
	Self-employed	Total	3,096	6,479	109 %	
	-	Male	3,096	5,108	65 %	
	-	Female	:	1,371	-	
	Contributing family worker	Total	544	:	-	
	-	Female	544	:	-	
	Member of an agricultural holding or of a cooperative	Total	270	:	-	
	-	Female	270	:	-	
Public administration and defence - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	404,261	389,174	-4 %	5 %
	-	Male	255,753	259,401	1 %	
	-	Female	148,508	129,773	-13 %	
	Employee	Total	404,261	389,174	-4 %	
	-	Male	255,753	259,401	1 %	
	-	Female	148,508	129,773	-13 %	
Health and social work - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	416,086	416,575	0,1 %	5 %
	-	Male	79,688	74,265	-7 %	

	-	Female	336,398	342,310	2 %	
	Employee	Total	403,295	406,549	1 %	
	-	Male	75,004	72,381	-3 %	
	-	Female	328,291	334,168	2 %	
	Employer	Total	6,813	125	-98 %	
	-	Male	4,532	:		
	-	Female	2,281	125	-95 %	
	Self-employed	Total	5,978	9,902	66 %	
	-	Male	152	1,884	1139 %	
	-	Female	5,826	8,018	38 %	

Source: Romanian National Institute of Statistics.

Available at: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>.

Table 5: Employment by activity of the national economy and by sex

CANE activity of national economy sections	Status in employment	Sex	Period		
			Quarter IV 2019	Quarter IV 2020	
			MU: Persons		
			Number of persons	Number of persons	% of men & women in employment (% of the total people in employment in the respective sector)
Total	Total	Total	8,653,711	8,504,666	
-	-	Male	4,962,659	4,903,022	
-	-	Female	3,691,052	3,601,644	
Agriculture, forestry, fish farming - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	1,784,559	1,687,336	
-	-	Male	1,045,537	995,821	59 %
-	-	Female	739,023	691,515	41 %
Mining and quarrying - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	59,508	59,055	
-	-	Male	51,570	50,125	85 %
-	-	Female	7,939	8,930	15 %
Manufacturing- CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	1,632,109	1,524,073	
-	-	Male	939,794	874,070	57 %
-	-	Female	692,315	650,002	43 %
Production and distribution of electric and thermal energy, gas and warm water and air conditioning - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	73,097	74,233	
-	-	Male	63,017	59,987	81 %
-	-	Female	10,080	14,246	19 %
Water distribution; sanitation, waste management, decontamination activities - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	113,004	116,139	
-	-	Male	86,536	90,916	78 %
-	-	Female	26,469	25,223	22 %
Trade - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	1,313,211	1,367,275	
-	-	Male	596,621	613,847	45 %

-	-	Female	716,591	753,428	55 %
Transport and storage- CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	507,486	546,969	
-	-	Male	451,924	480,348	88 %
-	-	Female	55,562	66,621	12 %
Information and communications - CAEN Rev.2	Total	Total	171,635	216,648	
-	-	Male	115,175	138,283	64 %
-	-	Female	56,460	78,364	36 %
Public administration and defence - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	404,261	389,174	
-	-	Male	255,753	259,401	67 %
-	-	Female	148,508	129,773	33 %
Health and social work - CANE Rev.2	Total	Total	416,086	416,575	
-	-	Male	79,688	74,265	18 %
-	-	Female	336,398	342,310	82 %

Source: Romanian National Institute of Statistics.

Available at: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>.

Annex III – Good Practice Fiche

Name/title of the measure Period of implementation <i>[Specify when the project/strategy/experience started, if it is still ongoing or finished and if concluded, indicate when]</i> Body responsible for implementation	Temporary increase in the earnings of people employed in the health sector 2020 – ongoing (end foreseen when the alert state is removed)
Type of intervention	Financial incentives
Territorial coverage (national, regional, local)	National
Financial allocations	European Social Fund (ESF); Human Capital National public funds
Main goals and reasons for introduction <i>[Specify the objects of the project/strategy/experience and the results it is supposed to achieve]</i>	Incentivise workers' retention in the health sector Reward the commitment and risks of people employed in the health sector. Remunerate the efforts and risks of people employed in the health sector
Main target groups	People employed in the health sector
Main partners/stakeholders involved (promoter and partners of the project/policy; typology and roles of actors involved)	Romanian Government and Ministry of Health Romanian social partners in the health sector
Main actions/measures implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEO no. 131/2020 introducing a 30% increase in the basic salary of civil servants employed in the public health directorates and prefect's institutions and a 40 % increase in the case of the Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Directors of the Public Health Directorates during the state of alert. GEO No. 43/2020 foreseeing the introduction of a risk incentive amounting to gross RON 2,500 for several categories of workers in the healthcare sector. Order no.1.070/94/2.087/2020 foresees an increase in the risk bonus foreseen by Law 56/2020 for staff in the health sector in direct contact with patients tested positive for Coronavirus: 30 % for staff that provide medical assistance/qualified primary help to/transport of patients tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 with medium/severe symptoms and to 25 % for staff in contact with patients with other forms. Government Resolution no. 1035/2020 foreseeing a bonus for extremely dangerous work conditions for the medical, health and auxiliary staff from public health units and their structures. The bonus amounts to 75 %-85 % of the basic salary.
Main results/achievements to date and expected longer term impacts according to available monitoring/evaluations <i>[Both quantitative and qualitative – specify results and outputs]</i>	NA

Main weaknesses/obstacles and how they have been addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The higher increase in the wages of managers of the Public Health Directorates compared to that of the other civil servants was contested by several social partners due to its weak justification. • The temporary duration of the measures taken was questioned by workers in the health field (L. Lungu and G. Ciobanu, 2020). Interviewees underlined that there is a need for structural changes in the wage policy in the health sector, implying also a change in the way wages are defined (e.g. introduction of performance-based systems). • The need to accompany financial incentive measures with measures focused on other aspects (e.g. safety in the workplace, attention to mental well-being). A recent survey of health staff also revealed that employees in this sector requested that supplementary working hours are adequately remunerated and that night shifts are remunerated taking into account the basic salary.
Main strengths	The main strength of the measure refers to the extension of the measure beyond medical staff (doctors and nurses). In fact, the measure also includes workers from paramedical services, workers from auxiliary services, workers from the Public Health Directorates, etc.
Innovative aspects if any	The measure was not considered innovative by interviewees.
Main lessons learnt	<p>The financial incentives provided to workers in the health sector were well received by employees in this sector and prevented social disputes and demotivation during the management of the COVID-19 crises. However, a recent survey of health staff reveals that the temporary financial incentives are not enough (L. Lungu and G. Ciobanu, 2020). Firstly, they should be stabilised and wage rights should be fully respected. Secondly, financial incentives should be accompanied by measures paying attention to the working conditions, support services for health staff, skills and innovation in the equipment used.</p> <p>These reasons also explain why some of the interviewees did not consider financial incentives granted during the emergency and alert state as good practice.</p>
Additional comments/links/sources (if any)	http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/229025 . http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/224714 . http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/234215 . http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/227591 . https://COVID-19.solidaritatea-sanitara.ro/studii/studiul-evaluarea-impactului-pandemiei-COVID-19-asupra-lucratorilor-din-sanatate/ .

This country case explores the situation of essential workers in Romania in the context of the COVID-19 emergency, with a focus on women and migrant workers in low-paid frontline occupations. The study first provides a definition of essential workers in this country, together with key socio-demographic characteristics. It then analyses, based on existing literature and selected stakeholder interviews, the main impacts of COVID-19 on working conditions. Finally, it illustrates key policy measures and agreements adopted in Romania to support essential workers and their personal and professional lives.

This document was provided by the Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies at the request of the committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL).
