



# **Fourth quarterly report on Covid-19 impact on industrial relations**

*Preliminary results*

*June 2022*

**BARCOVID**

**AIASHSI**

•• WageIndicator

CELSI

Central European  
Labour Studies  
Institute

 **Sant'Anna**  
School of Advanced Studies - Pisa

## **BARCOVID**

The BARCOVID project aims to improve knowledge about the content of collective agreements in Europe and to undertake research activities to enhance the collection of comparative information on collective bargaining outcomes. The project takes in account the Covid-19 impact on industrial relations in Europe, which is approached from different angles, such as government measures and occupational health and safety. Lead partner is the University of Amsterdam/AIAS. The Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI), Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies and WageIndicator Foundation are the project's key actors.

### **University of Amsterdam/AIAS-HSI**

AIAS-HSI is an institute for multidisciplinary research and teaching at the University of Amsterdam (UvA), the largest university in the Netherlands. AIAS-HSI has as its objective the coordination, implementation and stimulation of interdisciplinary research into the practice of labour law and social security law. Therefore it combines insights from the social sciences, legal dogmas and legal theories in its research.

### **Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI)**

Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI) is a non-profit research institute based in Bratislava, Slovakia. It fosters multidisciplinary research about the functioning of labour markets and institutions, work and organizations, business and society, and ethnicity and migration in the economic, social, and political life of modern societies. CELSI strives to make a contribution to the cutting-edge international scientific discourse.

### **Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies**

Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies is a public university institute - with special autonomy - working in the field of applied sciences: Economics and Management, Law, Political Sciences, Agricultural Sciences and Plant Biotechnology, Medicine, and Industrial and Information Engineering. The School promotes the internationalization of didactics and research with innovative paths in the fields of university education, scientific research and advanced training.

### **WageIndicator Foundation**

WageIndicator Foundation collects, compares and shares labour market information through online and offline surveys and research. Its national websites serve as always up-to-date online libraries featuring (living) wage information, labour law and career advice, for employees, employers and social partners. In this way, WageIndicator is a life changer for millions of people around the world.

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### **Bibliographical information**

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## Introduction and the methodology

In this report, we present preliminary results of data mining and text analysis of the newsletter outputs published by the selected stakeholders at the EU level. The goal of these quarterly reports is to address the first research question of the BARCOVID project: “*How have the Covid-19 crisis, the state-imposed measures and their consequences affected the industrial relations landscape in EU27 and 5 candidate countries?*” To respond to this question, text data (text extractions) were collected from social partners’ press releases and newsletters at the EU level and then further analysed. In total, **1,428 texts** were extracted from the newsletters of organizations, particularly Wageindicator (20%), ETUI (12%), BusinessEurope (10%), UniEurope (5%), country-level newsletters letters (40%), and others (12%), between March 2020 and March 2022 based on the selected list of keywords (in Annex).

As already explained in the First Quarterly Report, the methodology mainly consists of the text mining techniques (using Python), supported by qualitative and quantitative text analysis of the newsletter outputs. While looking at the most frequent topics and policies allows us to identify which have been the most relevant measures discussed in the public discourse among the social partners.

The analysis presented in this report consists of:

**(1) Descriptive quantitative analysis** of the whole sample (1,428 text extractions) that involves (a) analysis of the frequency of keywords and (b) comparison of the first and the second year of the pandemic.

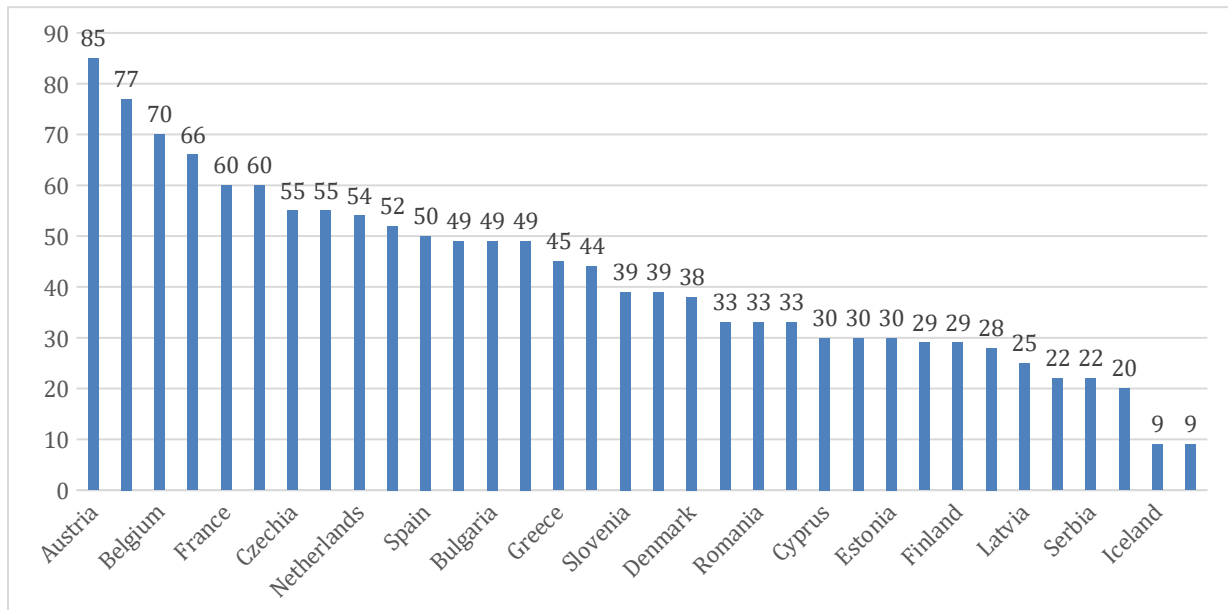
**(2) Qualitative and quantitative data analysis based on the welfare states typology** (1,047 text extractions) that includes (a) comparison of the policies between the types of welfare regimes and (b) comparison between the first and the second pandemic year. While quantitative part of this analysis consists of analysis of the frequency of keywords, the qualitative part presents the text analysis of the selected newsletter outputs using the Dedoose software (in total 150 outputs). We focused on six categories of policy measures, namely *job retention schemes, loans, remote work, care-giver support, measures for non-standard workers, and protection of workers*.

The countries in the sample were categorised according to the **welfare regimes classification** (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Ferrera, 1996.; Adascalitei, 2012) as follows: Conservative regimes (Austria, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands), Liberal regimes (Ireland and United Kingdom), Mediterranean countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus), Social Democratic Regimes (Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Iceland) and Central and Eastern Europe (Czechia, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia).

## Preliminary results

As Figure 1 shows, in total 1,428 text data were extracted by July 2020. The average number of text extractions per country is 42, with relevant differences between the most represented countries (i.e., Austria, Germany, Belgium, and Ireland) and the least represented ones (Malta, Iceland, and Liechtenstein).

**Figure 1: Distribution of text extractions per country (N=1,428)**

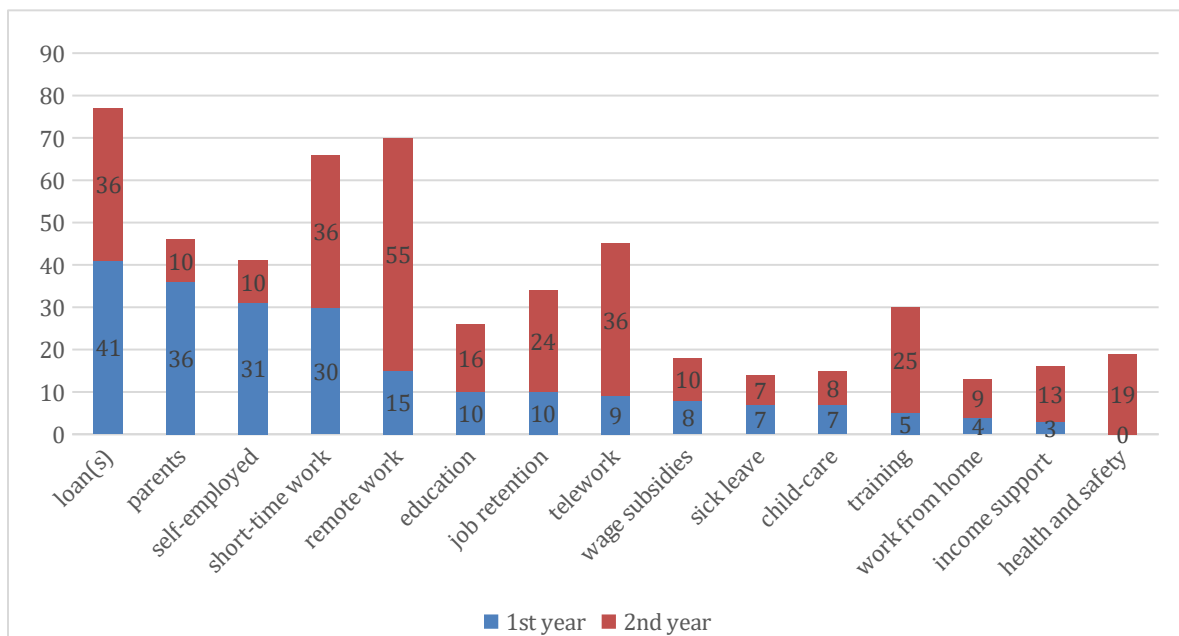


Source: Authors

As can be seen in Figure 2, the frequency of keywords varies across the two pandemic years, 2020 and 2021. While in 2020 the keywords *loans*, *parents*, *self-employed*, and *the short-time work schemes* dominated the social partners' discussions, the analysis for 2021 showed different trends; although *loans* remained one of the most frequent words in 2021, *remote work* and *telework* became the most prevalent in 2021. At the same time, the frequency of the keyword *parent* dropped significantly between 2020-2021 which may be related to the fact the school closures were less common in 2021 than in 2020. Also, the keyword *short-time work* remained among the most frequent keywords in 2021 due to a volume of short-time work-related policies that were implemented in European countries as a preventive strategy against layoffs.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, the prevalence of the keyword *trainings* in the discourse increased substantially between 2020 and 2021. Trainings were also closely related to the short-time work schemes, as in many EU countries they are an integral part of these schemes.

<sup>1</sup> Drahokoupil, J. and Müller, T. (2021). Job retention schemes in Europe. A lifeline during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Figure 2: Frequency of the keywords between two pandemic years 2020 and 2021 (N=571)**



Source: Authors

### Analysis based on the welfare state typology

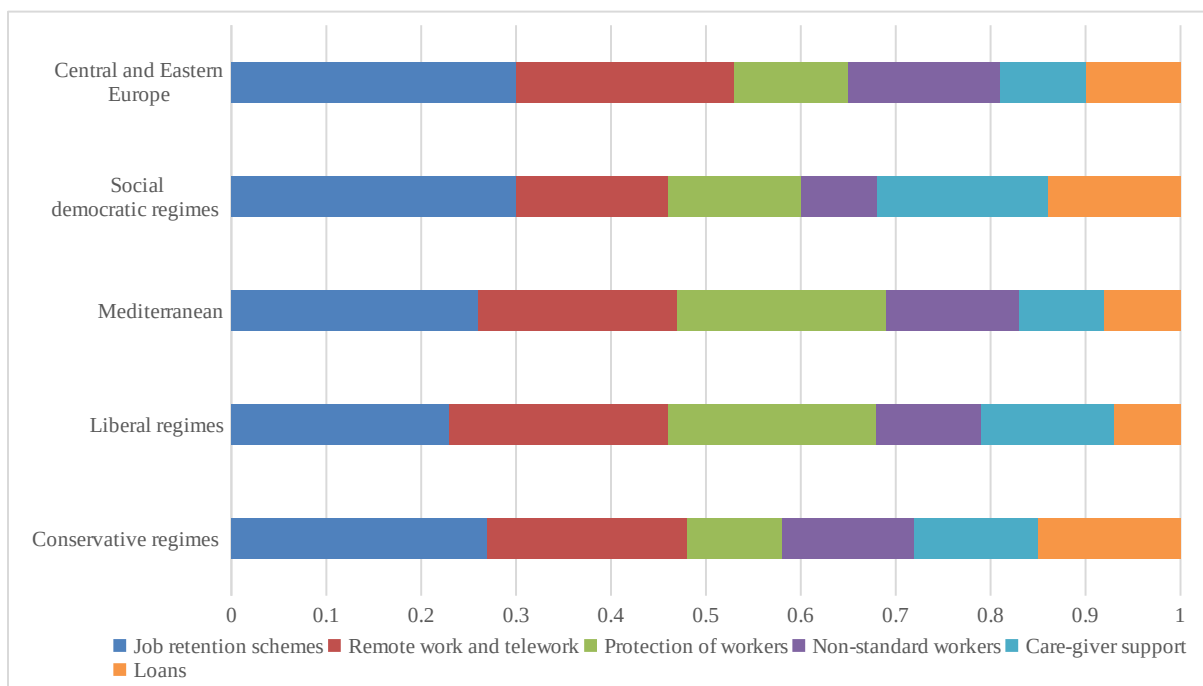
This part of the report informs about both qualitative and quantitative findings based on the welfare regime typology. The welfare regime typology clusters countries accounting for national institutional reconfiguration within the European integration process (Ferrera, 2020) which is clearly relevant for the analysis of social partners' discourse.

The findings from the quantitative analysis show that while the keyword *loans* dominated in the newsletters (see the Third Quarterly Report), the text analysis of the selected newsletter outputs showed that *loans* were less frequently associated in relation to the social dialogue and the role of tripartite partners across all the welfare regimes. This result may indicate that *loans* were not a policy response strongly embedded in social dialogue, but rather a measure initiated by the national governments. On the contrary, different types of *job retention schemes* seem to be in the spotlight of the European social dialogue across all the welfare regimes. Indeed, *Job retention schemes* present different types of policy measures including short-time work schemes, wage compensation schemes for different types of workers (e.g., workers in general, non-standard workers, sick workers), and temporary layoffs schemes. The social partners discussed mainly adoption and implementation of (1) new temporary wage subsidy schemes (including measures on shorter working hours, industry related schemes, temporary layoffs measures etc.); (2) amendments of existing job retention schemes in relation to eligibility criteria (e.g., enabling self-employed or SMEs participate in the schemes) and changes in the cap of the financial support; and (3) company or industry level collective agreements relating to short-time work schemes (industry or company specific conditions for workers participating in these schemes).

Novel policies have been discussed as well in the policy discourse among the social partners during the pandemic, mainly new flexible working arrangements such as regulation of the remote working or teleworking (the right to telework, the right to disconnect and other conditions improving access to teleworking or working conditions), payments to cover costs of remote working (e.g., technical equipment, utilities), and a four-day working week. Importantly, in Central European countries, the social partners intensively discussed also legal conditions relating to the institutionalisation of the short-time work scheme. In this region, the pandemic triggered social partners to adopt short-time work schemes as an integral part of the social security system to respond to the current or potential future crisis, for instance, in Slovakia and Czechia, this policy change was inspired by the German *Kurzarbeit* model.<sup>2</sup>

As Figure 3 shows, a convergence emerges between the countries across the welfare regimes in terms of policy measures mainly concerning job retention schemes and flexibilization of work arrangements (remote working, teleworking). Indeed, similar measures have been adopted in EU countries, such as temporary or permanent short-time work schemes, temporary wage subsidies for the most affected industries and companies, as well as the right to teleworking and improving conditions for teleworkers and remote workers.

**Figure 3: Differences in the policies across welfare regimes (2020-2021)**



Source: Authors

The analysis, however, also shows that Social democratic and Conservative regimes put more emphasis on the support for the care-givers in the form of sickness leaves, extension of parental and maternity leaves to enable workers to take care of their children during school closures.

On the contrary, the Mediterranean countries focused mainly on *protection of workers*, amendments of flexible work arrangements and different kind of support for *non-standard*

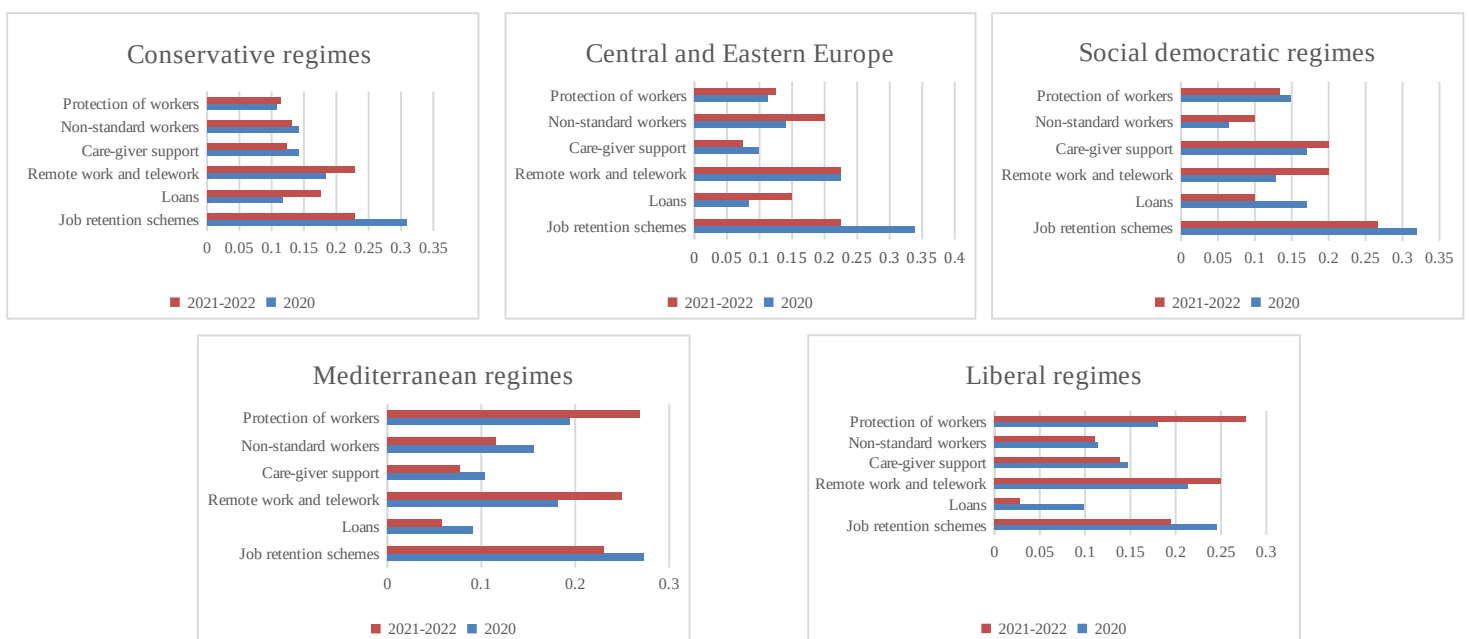
<sup>2</sup> More information about the text analysis is provided in Table 1 and Table 2 in the Annex.

workers (mainly self-employed or seasonal workers). These countries introduced different restrictions on health and safety regulations both at national and company level. These amendments were mainly related to the treatment of the sick workers, testing procedures, or measures at the workplace to prevent the spread of the virus. The support provided to the non-standard workers is related to the compensation of income losses or sickness leaves for the sick self-employed or those in quarantine.

During the pandemic, the focal point of the policy discourse among the social partners in the Central and Eastern European countries was the *job retention policies*, particularly *short-time work schemes* that were adopted as temporary measures to prevent job losses. Later they were discussed as permanent policy measures to mitigate the impact of current and future crises.

The discourse about policy measures evolved variously in the welfare regimes between 2020 and 2021. As Figure 4 illustrates, the *job retention schemes* were more dominant in social partners' discourse across all the welfare regimes in 2020. While less frequent in 2021-2022, different types of job retention schemes have been an essential part of the public discourse in Europe. On the contrary, the discourse about the *loans* evolved differently across EU countries and remained more marginal: while in the Conservative regimes and Central Europe, *loans* were more present in the discourse in 2021 rather than in 2020, in the Liberal regimes, Social democratic and Mediterranean countries the opposite is true. The *remote work* and *telework*-related measures were largely discussed in all the different welfare regimes, to the greatest extent in the Mediterranean countries and Liberal regimes. The *care-giver support* was slightly more prevailing in 2020 in all regime types, except for the Social democratic regimes. The policy measures for the *non-standard workers* were more discussed in 2021 in Central and Eastern Europe and Social democratic regimes. *The protection of workers* was particularly in spotlight in 2021 in Liberal regimes, Mediterranean countries and only slightly in Conservative regimes and Central and Eastern Europe.

**Figure 4: Evolution of the public discourse over time in the welfare regimes (2020 and 2021-2022)**



Source: Authors

## Conclusions

The fourth quarterly report presents the preliminary findings of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the whole sample (1,428 text extractions) and the selected countries (1,047 text extractions) based on the welfare regime typology. We can observe differences between the first and second pandemic year, when *remote work/telework* and *short-time work schemes* (associated with *trainings* and *education*) became more relevant in the policy discourse as the pandemic progressed. The analysis showed not only variations between the welfare regime types, but also some convergence in relation to the policies that were discussed in the social partners' discourses. It seems that mainly different types of *job retention schemes* and *flexible work arrangements* (remote work and telework) were in the spotlight of the policy discourse across all the welfare regime types. At the same time, it appears that a couple of novel policies were discussed as well in the policy discourse among the social partners during the pandemic, mainly for what concerns new flexible working arrangements, such as regulation of the remote working or teleworking and institutionalised job retention schemes.

## Literature

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## ANNEX

**Table 1: Main policies based on the text analysis of the newsletter outputs (data for 2020)**

<b>Conservative regimes</b>	<b>Liberal regimes</b>	<b>Mediterranean countries</b>	<b>Social democratic regimes</b>	<b>Central and Eastern Europe</b>
<p>Salary support schemes</p> <p>Amendments of short-time work schemes (cap of support, eligibility criteria, inclusion of self-employed and SMEs)</p> <p>Support of parents in case of school closures</p> <p>Support for civil servants (specific payments for remote working)</p> <p>Emergency plans for SMEs and self-employed</p> <p>Pay rises for health care workers</p>	<p>Job retention schemes (introduction of temporary wage compensation schemes)</p> <p>Sick pay for sick or quarantined workers at the company level</p>	<p>Job perseverance schemes mainly short-time work schemes and temporary layoffs schemes (including regional level ones)</p> <p>Reduction of social contributions</p> <p>Support for sick and quarantined workers</p> <p>Health and safety regulations (both national and company level; industry specific – health care sector, transport)</p> <p>Flexibilisation of teleworking regulation and tax incentives for remote working</p>	<p>Payment for quarantined workers including freelancers and self-employed</p> <p>Parental allowances or extension of maternity leave</p> <p>Enhanced unemployment benefit scheme</p> <p>Compensation scheme for the self-employed</p> <p>Job retention schemes – wage compensation, short-time work schemes, temporary layoffs</p> <p>Attention on the long-lasting issues such as reform of sickness leave</p>	<p>Job preservation policies: subsidy programmes to preserve jobs</p> <p>Tax deferrals or deferrals of health and pension contributions for businesses and self-employed</p> <p>Sickness benefits for parents and sick workers</p> <p>Financial support for the self-employed</p>

Source: Authors

**Table 2: Text analysis of the newsletter outputs based on the welfare regimes (data for 2021)**

<b>Conservative regimes</b>	<b>Liberal regimes</b>	<b>Mediterranean countries</b>	<b>Social democratic regimes</b>	<b>Central and Eastern Europe</b>
<p>Financial support for teleworking workers (e.g., tax deduction)</p> <p>New agreements on telework for public employees (voluntary nature of telework, health and safety, gender equality, data security and privacy, working time, and the</p>	<p>New regulation of remote working (introduction of the right to teleworking)</p> <p>Mandatory vaccinations for employment</p> <p>Health and safety regulation – guidance on ventilation testing,</p>	<p>New regulation of remote working – national-level and company level (the right to teleworking, right to disconnect support for teleworking expenses)</p> <p>Extension of job</p>	<p>Amendment of short-time work schemes (e.g., extension of short-time lay-offs, amendment of short-time work schemes, new collective agreements on the company level)</p> <p>Extension of parental leave</p>	<p>Amendments of the short time work – extension (cap of support, eligibility of criteria)</p> <p>Flexible work arrangements (the right to teleworking)</p>

right to disconnect), Amendments of the short-time work schemes (increased budget, duration extension) Care-taker support Introduction of four day working week Tax deferrals, tax bonus related to covid impact for businesses	vaccination	retention schemes (cap of support, eligibility criteria)	Special provision for the public servants (crisis plan, overtime work)  Flexible working arrangements (introduction of four-day week in combination with remote working arrangements at the local level)	
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Source: Authors

### List of keywords

1. **Covid-19:** pandemic, corona, COVID-19, COVID, vaccine, vaccine refusal, vaccination, virus, syndemic, patent waiver, green pass.
2. **Policy responses (mitigating exposure to the virus):** masks, sanitisers, closure, distance measures, protective clothes, protective equipment, disinfectant, antibacterial, thermometer, test, testing.
3. **Policy measures (labour market):** green pass, kurzarbeit, short-time work, remote work, telework, work from home, flexible work arrangements, online work, hybrid work, sick leave, ergonomic tools, training, liquidity loan(s), loan(s), stimulus package, income support, income maintenance, wage subsidies, subsidies, employment protection, job retention, occupational health, health and safety, childcare, grace period, tax break, tax exemption, tax deferral, helicopter money, emergency payment/one-off payment, self-isolation, coronacheck, 3G, QR code.
4. **Impact of the pandemic:** bankruptcy, job losses, quarantine, understaffed, burnout/burned out;
5. **Industrial relations:** trade unions, employers, employer’s association, social partners, industrial relations, collective bargaining, wage bargaining, salary bargaining, tripartite, social dialogue, labour union, social impact;
6. **Other:** self-employed, parents, sick workers, health care workers, essential workers, female workers, education, quarantine workers.