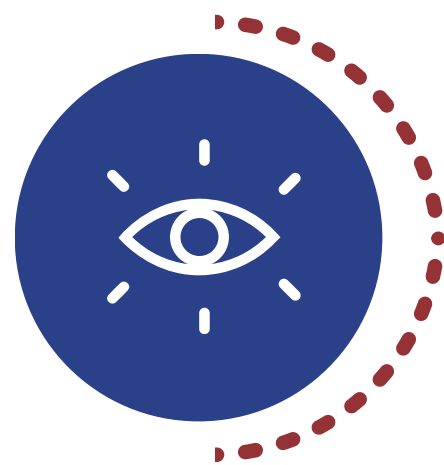


# DEFEN-CE: SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN DEFENCE OF VULNERABLE GROUPS IN POST-COVID-19 LABOUR MARKETS

## 1 THE DEFEN-CE PROJECT

- **Question:** How social dialogue helped addressing employment and social protection rights of vulnerable groups in the labour markets during and after the COVID-19 pandemic
- **Methods:** multi-method approach, including database analysis and qualitative comparative analysis at the EU and national levels.
- **Country scope:** all European regions (Northern, Western, Central, Southern, Eastern Europe); 10 Member States analysed in pairs (CZ-SK, LT-LV, FI-SE, NL-DE, IT-ES) and 2 candidate countries (SRB, TR)



## 2 14 VULNERABLE GROUPS

Vulnerability by labour market status and social status, 14 groups identified as vulnerable to poverty and job loss:

- single parents (especially mothers)
- low-income and minimum-income workers
- low-skilled workers
- migrant workers
- non-standard workers
- undocumented workers
- seasonal workers
- self-employed
- care workers
- ethnic minorities
- women
- elderly
- LGBTIQ+
- persons with disabilities



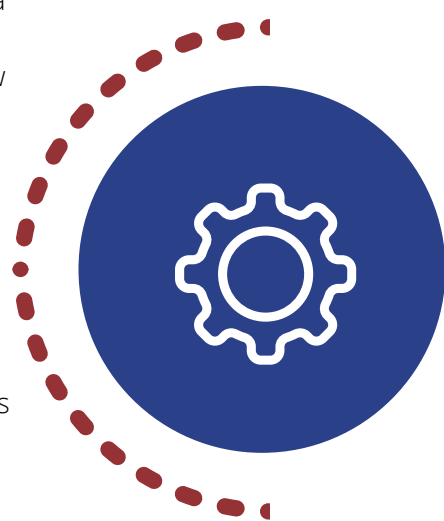
## 3 853 MEASURES IN 27+2 COUNTRIES

- DEFEN-CE database of 853 measures adopted in the EU-27, Serbia and Turkey in 2020-2022
- 53% of measures aimed at retention of employment and income; adjustments in traditional social security schemes; new benefits to address social security risks
- 24% of measures exclusively about reducing health and safety risks at the workplace
- Measures increased duality among the vulnerable: those in formal employment vs. atypical/informal workers (e.g., Serbia)
- Measures for vulnerable persons not covered by formal protection: cash transfers, donation campaigns (e.g., Turkey)



## 4 PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

- Lack of dedicated protection measures for vulnerable group faced social partner criticism (e.g., Italy)
- Relevance of general employment retention schemes and other measures for vulnerable groups subject to country-specific eligibility criteria (e.g., violations against marginalised Roma communities in Slovakia)
- Polarization of the economies - core sectors vs. those with low paid and unstable work (e.g., Germany and the Netherlands)



## 5 SOCIAL DIALOGUE

- Almost half of the 853 policies with consultation/involvement of social partners: employers involved in 47% and trade unions in 45% of protection measures
- Greatest attention of social partners to short-time work schemes and employment retention
- Pre-defined structures of social dialogue helped to define measures, remained important during the pandemic (e.g., Finland, Spain, Sweden)
- New phenomenon - ad-hoc advisory bodies to the government, including social partners, in Central and Eastern Europe (e.g., Czechia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia)
- Power asymmetry between the government and social partners (e.g., the Netherlands)

## 6 LEARNING POINTS

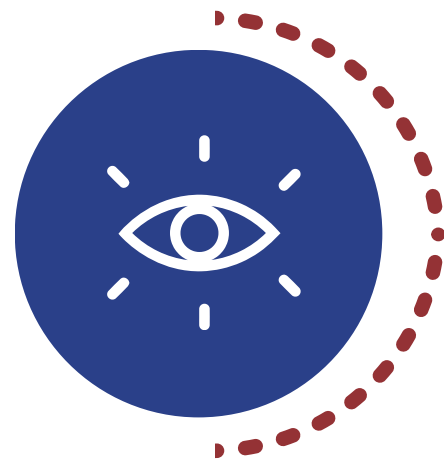
- Few COVID-19 protection measures tailored exclusively to vulnerable groups
- Social partner involvement subject to the pre-pandemic conditions of social dialogue
- In most studied countries, social dialogue restored without major innovation, but social partner legitimacy strengthened (e.g. Spain)
- Social dialogue remains important, but the pandemic as a missed opportunity to reach improvements therein
- Innovative solutions to the pandemic via social dialogue: sector-specific and tailored approach (e.g. agriculture in Germany)
- Innovation in topics for social dialogue: inter-sectoral mobility, new ways of organizing work (the Netherlands)



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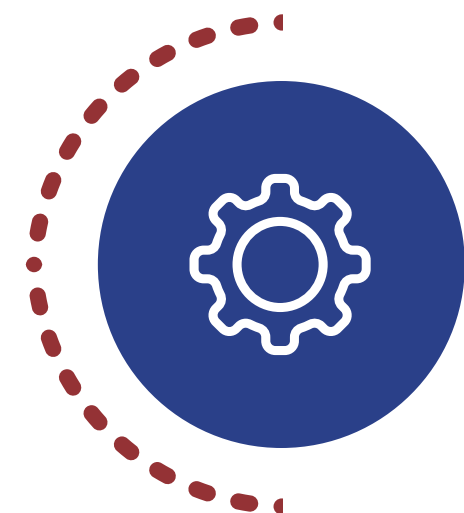


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