

CoVid-19 Impact on the Graphical sector – 1st Assessment.

The impact of CoVid-19 in Europe has had very significant social effects, the long-term consequences of which we are not yet in a position to assess, at a time when countries are beginning to impose measures, at first timid, and more forcefully as the pandemic spread through Europe, to contain the spread of the virus.

The lives of companies and workers have been deeply affected and two elements, health protection and the economic consequences in the short and medium term, are at the centre of the attention of all political and social actors.

This document is a first approach to the impact of this situation in the Graphical and Packaging sectors, which we will complete as the days advance with the information gathered among the affiliated organisations of UNI Europa, in order to elaborate a global strategy for the protection of the health of the workers in the sector and to reduce the economic consequences that they might suffer.

Packaging & Tissue sectors.

The restrictions on movement imposed to the population as a whole have resulted in an increase in demand for e-commerce. Amazon will hire 100,000 new workers in its stores to meet demand in the U.S. and plans wage increases (\$2 per hour) worldwide.

Likewise, the fear of shortages has also overwhelmed the demand for basic assets in the supermarkets, forcing a drastic increase in replacement rates.

One of the side effects is a substantial increase in demand for packaging and labelling products, forcing companies in the sector to increase production.

The Tissue sector has also been heavily impacted as assets such as masks, disposable protective suits, toilet paper or other sanitary paper products become highly demanded, either because of their fundamental role in preventing the spread of the disease, or because of panic over stock-outs.

Demand in this sector has skyrocketed overnight and many multinational companies are struggling to adapt their production to try and meet increasing demand, while the supply of raw materials is an additional concern.

In these sectors, where teleworking is not possible and the risk of infection coexists with a context of increased production, trade unions must be vigilant in ensuring that health and safety measures are scrupulously observed.

It is essential to strengthen international solidarity in order to put pressure on those multinationals that might be putting their workers at risk, as well as to support any actions initiated by workers' representatives to ensure health protection or to negotiate compensation.

EWCs and Trade Union Alliances can play a role in monitoring measures and setting high standards in all factories of the multinational group.

Printing Sector.

Meanwhile, the printing industry is expected to experience, if it does not already, a significant reduction in demand, which will be drastic in one of its fundamental pillars, namely advertising.

We must coordinate our action focused on the multinationals in the sector through the dissemination of good national practices for the treatment of a temporary overcapacity that may put jobs at risk, result in loss of knowledge and in the closure of work centres.

Coordination with employers' organisations, especially in a sector made up mainly of small companies, is essential in the search for measures to provide direct support to companies and/or alternatives to dismissal with the support of public powers.

The EWCs must play a fundamental role, demanding permanently updated information from companies and demanding respect for the right to consultation under extraordinary circumstances.

It is also important to strengthen coordination with affiliated organisations in order to establish an early warning of any process of restructuring, change or relocation of production that could have a European dimension.

Publishing

It's still early to assess the impact in this sector. Some reduction in demand would be foreseeable but the trend will depend on the prolongation of the movement restriction measures and their shape in the different countries.

In any case, a prolongation of social distance measures could well help to reinforce the trend towards digital publishing, so we must be vigilant.

Security Printing

At present, we are receiving calls from many parties (employers, public administration, medical organizations, etc.) to avoid paying with cash and even to use mobile applications rather than cards in order to avoid contagion.

However, these measures, although reasonable, if extended over time could help transform social uses and significantly accelerate the trend towards a cashless society.

With regard to other security printing products, it is certain that they will suffer a drop accompanying the suspension of present activities in public administrations and finance sector, which could contribute to accelerating the trend towards digitalisation.

Digital skills.

Millions of workers are going to be forced to telework from one day to the next. While most companies, especially multinationals, have the technological means to do so, many workers have not acquired the digital skills to be able to perform their jobs in this environment.

In the coming weeks it will be essential to implement plans for training workers and we must be alert to the effects that the lack of these skills may have on employment.

If the situation of social isolation is prolonged in time, we could be on the verge of a drastic change in the ways of working that we will have to be able to anticipate in time and manage as trade unions.

Here too, EWCs and trade union alliances can play an important role in managing the situation, both in the short and long term.

Trade unions will also have to update our digital presence and adapt to managing virtual working environments where contact with workers is sporadic and our digital communication strategies will have to be greatly strengthened.