



Online conference

Return to work after illness: the role of industrial relations

REWIR project

29 January 2021 – Online

Background

Demographic change and population ageing have been identified as major societal challenges, with profound impacts for labour markets across the EU. These processes put pressure on the fiscal sustainability of the welfare state and the capacity of healthcare systems. In an attempt to tackle these challenges, member states have adopted measures to extend working lives. These include increasing the retirement age and the (re)integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market, including individuals who have become inactive through illness or disability. Within this context, healthy ageing practices and good workplace health standards have become EU priorities, as underscored in the Europe 2020 agenda.

The purpose of the conference is to promote an open debate on the state of play and the upcoming challenges for industrial relations' actors in relation to workers returning to work after illness or for those with chronic diseases. Given the rapidly changing labour market landscape, including the effects of Covid-19, the discussion aims to explore future opportunities for return to work offered by the new EU Disability Rights Strategy for 2021-2030 and the EU Strategic Framework on Health & Safety at Work for 2021-2027. The panels will bring together participants from EU member states and EU-level organisations, inviting them to share developments in social partner strategies in return-to-work initiatives in their respective countries.

The research project "Negotiating return to work in the age of demographic change through industrial relations" (REWIR - VS/2019/0075) will inform the discussion. Its findings will show how different industrial relations and social dialogue practices contribute to the shape of return-to-work policies and extend working lives in the EU member states. Further information can be found on the project [website](#).

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Draft Agenda

- 09:30 – 09:35 **Welcome**
Cinzia Alcidi, Director, Head of Economic Policy and Jobs & Skills Units (CEPS)
- 09:35 – 10:05 **Keynote speech: Return to work and the new European Disability Rights Strategy**
- 10:05 – 10:50 **Negotiating return to work in the age of demographic change through industrial relations (REWIR): what is the situation in Europe?**
- Presentation of research findings: EU-wide findings in a comparative perspective (15 minutes)
 - Country snapshots: combination of country videos and short interventions by speakers from member states in REWIR (20 minutes)
 - Q&A (10 minutes)
- 10:50 – 11:00 *Break*
- 11:00 – 11:40 **How can social partners step up in return to work?**
Panel discussion with EU-level social partners (and national where possible): rounds of selected sections following REWIR research findings
- 11:40 – 11:50 **Visualising the discussion**
Presentation of the live event illustration
- 11:50 – 12:00 *Break*
- 12:00 – 12:50 **The road ahead: how can the EU Strategic Framework on Health & Safety at Work support job reintegration in the post-Covid-19 era?**
Panel discussion with experts, social partners and other stakeholders
- 12:50 – 13:00 **Concluding remarks**

