



BUSINESS NEEDS FLEXIBILITY AND SUPPORT TO PREPARE FOR THE RECOVERY

Despite the herculean efforts of healthcare professionals in the public and private sector, often without the resources they need to carry out their essential tasks, the pandemic will unfortunately be with us for several months to come. Businesses have thrown themselves into the provision of hospital facilities and the donation of PPE and healthcare equipment, both producing these materials and, in particular, maintaining services that are essential to our citizens. It is essential to acknowledge these contributions.

The impact of the crisis on the economy is already plain to see and nobody can be in any doubt that we will suffer an unprecedented recession during the coming months. Alongside the maintenance of activity in sectors that are essential and those in which operations can continue without exposing workers to the risk of infection, we have supported the measures imposing a lockdown, followed meticulously thanks to the commitment of ordinary citizens.

We consider that the speed and vigor of the recovery will be dependent upon the extent to which productive activity avoids stoppage, as well as the number of businesses that continue operating and the fewest possible number of workers losing their jobs. Despite this, and in the absence of consultation and social dialogue, the Government has decided to impose an immediate two-week “hibernation” on the majority of productive activities.

In parallel, and likewise in the absence of prior agreement, the Government has chosen to eliminate the possibility of terminating employment contracts on objective grounds, even though the situation is clearly one of “force majeure”. What is more, it has questioned the good faith of the business sector through insinuation, suspicion and the unnecessary threat of investigations into redundancy procedures.

Looking to the future, the best way to conserve jobs is by offering businesses less interference, and more flexibility and support at this critical juncture, rather than simply putting the brakes on dismissals. The liquidity measures and approval of temporary workforce restructuring plans are welcome, as are other measures that may relieve fiscal and corporate burdens preventing some businesses from going into liquidation.

Businesses need to participate in the search for the best solutions to tackling the unprecedented and critical situation in which we find ourselves. Business leaders will undoubtedly play the key role in ensuring a recovery in growth and employment that is rapid, inclusive and sustainable.

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