

### 3.1.1. The contents of the “product”. Facts and figures

#### *Surveys*

Sometimes a distinction is made between quantitative surveys, which measure in figures the present state of the economy and of businesses, qualitative surveys which measure in non-quantitative ways and/or members needs surveys which particularly seek to know what members want. The distinctions are probably more theoretical than practical, because a survey can easily combine quantitative questions with some open questions which allow more qualitative statements and need expression.

Without going into detail and without defining here the precise contents, with a survey, the employers' organisation should collect ideally hard information to inform the authorities and the public about pressing questions regarding:

- the present impact (how good or bad it is)
- prospects of future impact (how do we see at this stage the future)
- a description and prioritization of challenges- issues to cope with and to solve (what should be done?)

Starting from these basics, the questions will concern the following but can also be broader:

- Present state of business
  - active
  - non-active
  - partially active
- Who have been hit by COVID-19
  - Type of companies
  - type of sectors
  - which regions
- Extent of negative impact at this stage since the start COVID-19:
  - Effect on turnover last month versus last year, revenue
  - Effect on financial status: cash flow, reserves, projected profits 2020, credits
  - Effect on employment: number of temporary unemployed, number of employment versus last year
  - Effect on workers: % active, % sick leave, % with reduced working time, % teleworking, wage situation of workers: number of reduced wages and average %
- Prospects on future development (future with what we know at this stage concerning company and duration COVID-19 measures)
  - Level of % loss in turnover in next 3 months, until 2020
  - Level of employment over 3 months
  - Level of profits, investments, orders
  - Level of confidence
- Main challenges today for your business
  - Demand- supply disruptions
  - Labour issues (absence, distancing, sick leave, difficulties to adjust labour volume, labour cost, organization working from home)
  - Credit lines and cash flow
  - Transport difficulties
  - Unfair competition
  - Other
- What should governments do very soon for creating better business prospects whilst not endangering health:
  - Financial, fiscal, trade
  - Labour rules, rules for workers
  - Other ideas
- What should governments do for the longer term
- What do you expect from your EO : at national level – at sector level
- The ILO-ACTEMP survey is a very good sample for such survey. And ready-made.

This generic list of issues should not prevent employers' organisations to define some additional precise questions, linked to maybe some specific features of its country situation.

Please note that ILO-ACTEMP developed and published a ready-made questionnaire which is excellent and which can be easily used. Also DECP can advise by checking your survey questionnaire. ([https://www.ilo.org/actemp/publications/WCMS\\_740215/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/actemp/publications/WCMS_740215/lang--en/index.htm))

Surveys are however more than asking and collecting questions. The real result are short reports. They should in principle be reflecting only the results of the survey, but in an introduction, the link between the policy objectives and the survey results may be made. It will frame the survey results in the policy context and upgrade the survey from fact to argument.

Finally, but equally important, must be underlined that surveys and information gathered, which also concerns the views of members on what needs to be done, is not replacing the policy work preparation in policy committees via the normal governance institutions of the policy committee, Board and in times of urgency, the Executive Committee. Surveys may inform the governance institutions on certain members view. But the real decisions on the orientations to take in policy work are not based upon survey results, but on a careful weighing and discussion and decisionmaking of the governance bodies.

### *Research*

Above, it was remarked that research data are probably very limited on the impact of COVID-19 on the business world. However, as the COVID-19 develops, more and more official data will become available, because government agencies and social security agencies will be registering the real effects. And research institutions or important actors in economic policy, like National Banks, will develop scenario's .

The government authorities will probably have these data more quickly than the employers' organisations. The information role of the employers' organisation is hence not strengthened by serving these data to the authorities. But knowledge and close monitoring of what is gathered as data and research is of course paramount for the preparation of policy options and proposals by the employers' organisations towards the government. It would be a pity that a proposal which is formulated by the employers' organisation regarding economic recovery would be totally incompatible with figures or research which would be available officially, or at least a pity that the employers' organisation would not be aware that such research does exist.

The presence of employers' organisations in social security institutions (unemployment benefits, sickness benefits) and the presence in bodies of concertation on measures to take for a future restart of the economy can ensure the availability of such figures and data for the employers representatives.

As the COVID-19 crisis unfolds -when lock downs are over- and when the first discussions on restart are over also, the share of research input, versus input via rapid information gathering via surveys, will proportionally become more important in the discussions. This shift will also challenge the capacity off the employers' organisation, but may also provide for additional avenues of research and valorization of the role of the employers' organisation. We refer to input of the employers' organisation on discussion in labour law, via an analysis of CBA's and wage developments where the employers' organisation based upon its service role in HRM, may bring in additional knowledge and experience.

These themes will be elaborated in a later edition, once the first phases in crisis handling are over.

Interesting research may also concern the monitoring of policies in neighboring countries. Since the COVID-19 crisis is an identical issue in all countries, also the solutions can easily inspire. All are confronted with a temporary non activity; the fear for layoffs and the need for a stimulus policy after getting out of the health crisis.

Comparative "research" can be extremely useful, both for publications towards the public, as for lobby and advocacy reasons. Comparative research is also powerful, especially if it concerns "example" countries and neighbors. Politicians may find it more difficult to discard solutions which are working in other countries.