

City employment & Covid-19: from crisis to recovery

How do cities ensure resilience of workers on labour markets?



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Cities have been at the forefront of mitigating the negative effects of Covid-19 on local labour markets and preventing massive job losses. This paper highlights the short-term measures adopted by cities during the lockdown, as well as the local strategies for an inclusive and resilient employment recovery. It showcases the work of cities to map and develop the skills needed in emerging sectors and the programmes adopted to help people enter or transit the labour market.

The second part of the paper looks at city practices to increase the attractiveness of jobs in the care sector. It explores the measures during the pandemic, as well as the long-term actions to attract workers and to ensure decent working conditions.

Overview of city actions

The Covid-19 outbreak altered the patterns of the world of work and had a strong social-economic impact at local level. Cities have designed emergency responses to support the job retention, as well as long-term measures for an inclusive and fast recovery.

The economy has been disproportionately affected creating the disappearance of jobs and emerging of new sectors. Cities are implementing measures to ensure that workers can transition the labour market. Among the common actions to improve the service provided to people is the adaptation of the public employment and training services to an online, or hybrid format, as well as the development of digital job-matching tools to link unemployed people to staff shortages in emerging sectors.

The up-skilling and reskilling of workers is at the heart of active labour markets and recovery policies promoted by cities. Beside the changes of crisis-hit economy, the impact of the twin transition on the workers' competences for the new jobs, creates the need for strong skills intelligence on the local labour markets. Cities work with private sector to anticipate the skills needed and they provide tailor-made support to jobseekers to boost their employability. Training and lifelong learning are at the centre of many recovery strategies.

Cities have also dedicated efforts to supporting the most affected groups, such as the long-term unemployed, older workers, women, young people, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities or low-skilled workers. Participation

in training programmes is a challenge, particularly for women who have had to take on the majority of caring and home-schooling duties due to lockdowns, as well as those who lacked access to electronic devices or the internet. Covid-19 has highlighted the need to foster inclusive job-markets, and cities have taken the first steps to ensure that vulnerable groups are not left behind in recovery efforts.

Short-term measures to support employment during lockdown

To mitigate the negative effect of Covid-19 on employment and labour market, most of the cities have put in place emergency committees to design fast responses to lockdown and look at the potential measures for the recovery. For example, **Barcelona** has established 'The Economic Response Coordination Centre (CECORE)' to define and implement the cross-departmental municipal Covid-19 response strategy. CECORE aims to maximise resources by coordinate the relations with all the public authorities, as well as to engage the economic and social stakeholders in designing the responses. The city has also adopted an 'Agreement for Barcelona' to foster dialogue and consensus among political groups and economic, social, cultural and educational stakeholders. The agreement has four working committees on economic, social, cultural and urban areas. **Belfast** has adopted an economic plan to deal with Covid-19 crisis. The response phase (first six months) includes job retention and business survival measures, as well as support for digital transformation. In the

rebuild phase the city provides incentives for recruitment schemes for unemployed people, supports the start-ups, social enterprises and cooperatives (e.g. 'Innovation Factory Support Programme' and 'Go for it' project) and develops programmes for re-skilling of newly unemployed. The last phase is designed to support the long-term reconstruction of economy and to influence investment for inclusive and sustainable recovery through a 'Stimulus and Investment Plan for Green, Digital and Innovation'.

Another measure taken by cities to address the Covid-19 crisis, but also to boost the recovery, is the digitalisation of employment support services. **Munich's** Employment and Qualification Programme has moved its training to online platforms using creative solutions and tools to ensure that participants' access to training was not interrupted. **Barcelona** has shifted its services to an online format to match jobseekers with vacancies in essential services and municipal companies.

City actions regarding skills take two main forms. Firstly, local authorities are boosting programmes for skilling, up-skilling, and re-skilling with a special focus on digital capacities. Secondly, local employment services play a key role in matching jobseekers with specific skills to employers with staff shortages, or alternatively, identifying sectors with growing demand and leading job seekers to adequate training programmes. **Amsterdam's** goal is to achieve 'from-work-to-work' transitions, to keep people in employment. During the lockdown Amsterdam's responses were focused on the self-employed people. The city is investing in building a system that makes it easier to match skills with employee requirements, based on public-private partnerships and considerable investment in lifelong learning programmes. **Belfast** is also updating their employment services to increase quality workforce in social care, logistics, the green economy and automation, by closely engaging with employers to identify their needs and boosting digital re-skilling programmes and apprenticeships.

Local governments have also initiated projects to make their cities attractive to businesses. **Barcelona** is working on rebranding the city to make it a destination for investors and tourists. They will provide businesses with cash to prevent economic losses and make administrative procedures simpler and more flexible to facilitate the reactivation of activity. Sectors especially targeted by these measures are digital, industry, small business, the social economy, and tourism. **Amsterdam** has economically supported employers, so they are not forced to dismiss workers, and has paid special attention to the self-employed when allocating income support. **Belfast** is providing incentives, such as facilitating investment to support the creation of start-ups, social enterprises and cooperatives.

City practices to foster employment in the post-Covid-19 recovery

Cities have taken various actions to ensure that the post-Covid-19 recovery creates stable and resilient jobs, and that the initial consequences on employment are mitigated as much as possible. By adapting already existing services or creating innovative programmes, cities have harnessed the recovery process to rethink municipal support to employment and invest in the sectors and professions of the future.

Barcelona has developed a 2020-2021 Emergency Youth Employment Plan that targets young unemployed people and young workers who are not eligible for the Youth Guarantee. The city will provide tailor-made training in line with the skills needed by emerging sectors and businesses. In cooperation with the private sector, young people will benefit from mentoring programmes, and they will receive personalised support actions. So far, 650 participants have benefited from this initiative. **Barcelona** has also adopted the Activa Futur 2020-2021 programme. This is an emergency measure to respond to the increasing number of people in need of employment support and targets those over the age of 40 and with lower educational levels. Through Activa Futur, participants are provided with emotional

support, job orientation, reskilling and job-placement opportunities in a blended online and in-person format. The city is also developing a 9-month neighbourhood plan based on the creation of local employment teams that act as tutors and refer people to public resources and facilitate access to training and work experience.

In April 2020, **Munich** launched the 'Mia gehn online!' campaign to support small businesses such as retailers, restaurants and service providers in their transition towards digitisation. The campaign enabled them to adapt to new trends in the market, for example, by establishing online shops, order and delivery systems and facilitating access to large marketing platforms. This service was designed to prevent the devastating effects that lockdown would have on local businesses. In cooperation with technical and business schools, 25 project teams were formed. The young entrepreneurs were supported by around 300 volunteers from the tech world. This led to the creation of innovative solutions for city businesses within 24 hours after the requests for support, preventing the disruption of sales and service provisions.

Given the increasing need for digital skills in the job market and the need to pay special attention to groups at a high risk of exclusion, **Munich** has designed a project to teach tech skills to women of migrant and refugee backgrounds. The only device needed is a smartphone, as the online teaching room takes place on WhatsApp - avoiding obstacles posed by a lack of adequate equipment. Through the messaging service, participants learn how to browse the web safely, look for a job, or fill in an application with their phones.

Toulouse has also joined the group of cities using online platforms to make the process of searching for a job easier. **The Employment Hub** compiles the available information on job vacancies in the Toulouse Metropolitan Region, through an inventory of existing recruitment programmes and schemes.

Through matchmaking and skills analysis technology, it brings together offer and demand, by mapping staffing needs in the private sector and better profiling target groups in need of support. This is followed by tailored, needs-based orientation services, and self-training tools to develop soft and transferable skills. The programme also includes a dedicated phoneline to offer tailored and 'human' assistance, as well as the option to have physical meetings for citizens who have difficulties accessing or using technology.

For the long-term recovery **Amsterdam** looks at investments and stimulation for life-long learning programmes, support to skills matching through the partnership with education, civic and private entities. The aim is to reach the balance between permanent workers, temporary workers and self-employed. The city has established a **Regional Work Centre** with the aim of facilitating the transfer between jobs. It focuses on employability and job-matching to enable workers to use their skills in different or newly emerging sectors, and better adapt to an evolving job market. This public-private cooperation aims at preventing unemployment and support the transition on the labour market.

Belfast's Employment Academy Model provides for a platform to match businesses with skills shortages to jobseekers who might not have all the required skills. Alongside this matchmaking, the academy offers career orientation, trainings, and the opportunity to develop transversal employability skills. After participants go through the process, they are guaranteed a job interview and are supported by the academy for 6 months. Belfast is adapting the model to reflect current job-market needs. The city is focussing on growing sectors like social care and logistics. It is also looking for opportunities to expand to the green economy and automation, to ensure that jobseekers are fit for the sectors of the future.

Employment in care sector: increasing the attractiveness of jobs

Care jobs are essential for our society. The Covid-19 pandemic has put extra pressure on care work for both care receivers and care givers. The elderly and people with disability have suffered additional vulnerabilities like isolation and difficulties in accessing treatments, food and cleaning supplies. The workforce shortages in the care sector have affected the existing workers already under immense pressures in delivering support to people in need.

The demographic transformation and the increasing dependency position care sector among the emerging economies. According to the International Labour Organisation, the care economy has the potential to create around 117 million additional new jobs by 2030. Policy advancement is needed to ensure access of people to decent jobs. This can be achieved through initiatives that target labour standards, such as regulating and implementing decent working conditions, achieving equal pay, working time arrangements (including overtime compensation) and access to redress mechanisms. Priority should also be given to enabling a safe, attractive and stimulating work environment for both women and men care workers while implementing measures to facilitate the transition from the informal to the formal economy.

The public and private investment in care service provision has proven the positive benefits for society (e.g. return of women to paid employment, employability of older persons or people with intellectual impairments). At EU level, the European Pillar of Social Rights states under principle 18 on long-term care that everyone has the right to affordable long-term care services of good quality, in particular home care and community-based services.

Cities are designing and implementing innovative approaches to address the increasing dependency on care for their population to better respond to the challenges and negative effects of the pandemic.

The care sector will be pivotal to local economies in the years to come, and cities are developing programmes to make the sector more attractive, train workers to provide quality services and match potential workers with employees.

In November 2020 Lyon Metropole has hosted a study visit to exchange ideas and good practices with cities on how to increase the attractiveness of care jobs and how to ensure that workers have access to decent working conditions. Barcelona, Munich and Solna have shared their initiatives on fostering the employment and skills development for people to access the jobs in care sector.



Lyon Metropole

Lyon Metropole has a strategic approach to addressing the challenges in care sector, especially as community-care demands are growing in direct proportion with the ageing population. There is already a workforce shortage - employers and the public sector both struggle to recruit workers and the public service have insufficient qualified workforce.

Since 2018, Lyon Metropole's Department for Elderly and Disability, and the Department for Inclusion and Employment are running a joint action plan to promote the inclusion of unemployed people in this care sector. The **Action Plan for the Employment Inclusion in the Autonomy and Elderly Sector** aims to increase the attractiveness of the sector, promote access to employment in care services and improve human resources management in care companies. It has five main areas of intervention: to promote trades, mobilise beneficiaries and stakeholders, provide support for social innovation, mobilise and support employers and the inclusion employment sector.

Actions

- **'The Charter of 1000'** brings together companies that are committed to being responsible buyers by promoting inclusion and protecting the environment, to act as local employers and to develop the local ecosystem. The charter has 20 commitments for action to include people into the labour market. The city is offering a dedicated service with 12 company employment liaison officers that provide HR consultancy. The project facilitates cooperation between companies and inclusion stakeholders, and improves knowledge of the specific needs of local companies. 1071 companies have signed the Charter, 826 participants have attended more than 60 job meetings, and

more than 500 interview simulations have taken place within the initiative.

- The **'Autonomy and Elderly HR platform'** set up in 2020 allows local stakeholders to respond together to similar challenges. The platform is coordinated by a partners committee and it provides information on a range of services and local coordination activities such as a HR Club for training and sharing of good practices, actions to promote professions in the region, training for different employment paths, creation of new digital tools – a website and a newsletter for professionals. The platform also served as a Covid-19 emergency digital space.
- **The horizontal organisation for promoting care professions** was inspired from the Buurtzorg model in Netherlands, in which employees set up local teams operating in a limited geographical area, as a better and more autonomous way to organise human resources in such a labour-intensive sector. The Branch project launched in 2020 aims to experiment, capitalise, and disseminate a systemic response to the staff shortages affecting home care in Lyon Metropole. It acts on the quality of life in care jobs by setting up independent teams to improve working conditions, break employee isolation, prevent work-related strain, reduce absenteeism, improve coordination of care, and give meaning to home care work. It provides career paths for unemployed people through socio-professional support and employment coaching.

Competences of the Lyon Metropolitan Area
<https://youtu.be/kguy9Yagy24>

Inclusion Employment action plan - Autonomy and Elderly
<https://vimeo.com/481220813/ee83ef319f>

Barcelona

In Barcelona, the care sector is seen as a key sector for the community, and it has an important number of social services operators that are gaining importance in the local economy. The professional qualification of the employees of the sector is needed to reinforce the local companies.

Better career guidance, improved training programmes, better mapping of worker profiles and future tendencies, and an improved image of careers is needed to increase the attractiveness of jobs in care sector.

As part of the **+RESILIENT project**, Barcelona Activa is implementing a pilot action on the care sector in the city. The project uses open data, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and skills intelligence to improve professional qualifications, upgrade service quality and ensure the attractiveness of jobs. The main goal is to boost public policies that foster social innovation capabilities of enterprises with a high social vocation, by using the quadruple helix (research, enterprises, public sector and civil society) approach.

Objectives

- The city has conducted an analysis of the current situation of the care sector – specifically those services connected to dependent and elder people.
- Barcelona will refine and adapt its catalogue of professional profiles and skills in the care sector.
- The final step consists of designing the upskilling training plans for to fit the emerging needs of the care sector.

Main findings

The impact of digitalisation and new technologies will play a decisive role in care sector. ICT is enabling elderly persons to benefit from wider care services at home through telecare, tele-diagnostics and remote

monitoring, as well as accessing communication, leisure and social relations through digital tools. Digital skills are essential for carers.

The new training framework offers the possibility to certify new skills for the caregivers. Also, it helps the city to identify the new and emergent jobs and skills needed in the future. New sector trends can be detected and the information used for a better policy design for management, training and the delivery of the services.

The tendency towards a person-centred Care Work Model moves towards making care services a right, by placing the beneficiary at the centre of the care process.

Technology speeds up the creation of new job opportunities in care as well as the recruitment process. Companies have an increasing presence on online platforms using digital tools to match care givers and elderly or dependent people.

Relevance and visibility of care work

The access to care services is increasingly seen as a universal right. Care work is changing from being a family duty, mostly provided by women and with little public recognition, to being a strategic sector for job creation and for skills development.

In Barcelona, the care sector has been included as one of the nine strategic sectors of the city. Care has been mainstreamed across several strategies and action plans developing the policy responses at local level, fostering the creation of quality jobs, as well as improving the performance of the enterprises that provide care services.

More information on the project <https://plus-resilient.interreg-med.eu/>

Solna's approach to employment at local level is based on strong cooperation with employers and the trust relationships between job seekers, businesses and city officers. The city maintains a constant dialogue with stakeholders to map in detail both employers' needs and workers' skills. This helps the city to provide tailored education and training courses, and to match the skills needs and the offer at local level.

Vocational training is supplemented with personalised coaching and seminars on writing job applications, succeeding in interviews, or workers' rights and responsibilities.

Digital skills for care sector

In 2018, Solna started a European Social Fund (ESF) project to improve the digital competences and lifelong learning for people working in care sector, especially managers and employees in the Care Services Office and in the Child, Youth and Education Office. This has enabled the city to ensure that care givers are trained to provide high quality care services for children, elderly people and people with disabilities.

Objectives

- **Increase digital competence of care givers.** Digital competences are developed through peer learning by using digital working methods, tools and systems in day-to-day work. The participants take part in one-to-one learning sessions, e-learning classes, and can access quick reference guides. Managers are trained in Change Management and Digital Transformation.
- **Build a sustainable digital organisation.** The competence leaders, managers and participants work together to create new digital working methods.

City responses to Covid-19

Action 1: In Spring 2020, Solna started a **re-skilling project to bring together newly unemployed people and care sector employers**. The initiative aims to tackle the shortage in the health and care sectors, by re-skilling hospitality workers who lost their jobs due to the pandemic. The city is supporting companies and employees in their transition between sectors, therefore increasing the provision of care services for elderly and people with disabilities.

Action 2: **The Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants** aims to improve skills supply for the period November 2020 – December 2021 by development of new forms of cooperation to reduce unemployment among young people and newly arrived migrants. The project is the result of an agreement between five Swedish municipalities, including city of Solna and the Public Employment Services (PES) on specific job tracks. The process includes employers who are involved in the entire recruitment process - from defining the profile of the candidates to selecting them for the training.

Many of the job tracks are in the care sector, especially elderly care. The training within the care sector includes topics like nursing, treatment, communication, documentation, or confidentiality. Tracks are flexible in duration, to adjust to individual needs, and employers are involved throughout the whole process, strengthening the cooperation amongst stakeholders for the future of care work. The training and the internship opportunities equip the beneficiaries with the skills needed to be employed.

Munich

Munich's Employment and Qualification Program (MBQ) is the main city policy instrument for vocational and social integration into the labour market. One of the main areas of focus is the care sector will have approximately 13,700 vacant positions by 2030 only in the elderly care sector.

Munich is using a comprehensive approach starting from information campaigns, support for recruitment, counselling and vocational qualifications to address challenges like demographic decline, home care dependency and skills shortages.

Actions

- **Promotion and coordination of training opportunities in care sector.** Munich's care facility 'Münchenstift GmbH' is responsible for training almost 30 percent of young professionals in elderly care in Munich with around 225 apprentices each year. The city is also working with schools and youth welfare and integration centres to promote the apprenticeships in the care sector.
- **Training and recognition of foreign qualifications.** Through EU project 'Care international: Munich-Istanbul-Europe' nurses can gain their first experience as interns in Munich care facilities. Another initiative that is ongoing since 2012, in cooperation with the Munich Clinic Academy, is the preparation courses for the exam for recognition of foreign qualification in care training.
- **Language and vocational training.** The city offers language courses and provides qualifications for participants to enrol in vocational training as nursing assistants, nursing specialists or care givers.

- **Support for long-term unemployed.** Through the projects like 'Work&Act' and 'Donna Mobile', unemployed people can obtain a specialist qualification in intercultural elderly care or as an elderly care assistant.
- **Opportunities and knowledge exchange.** 'Annual Expert Care Forum' focuses on current care issues and wants to inform and discuss new developments in care training target group: school administrators, teachers from nursing schools, practical instructors, and specialist audience. Since 2019, the 'Care Jobs and Training Fair' offers direct contact to employers from the nursing and health sector, exhibition stands from Munich clinics, nursing facilities and nursing schools as well as universities with nursing courses.

Digitalisation of work in care sector

Munich is conducting a survey on the digitisation in the professional care to find out the digital care applications used today, the latest developments and future requirements.

The city's 'CareMeetsTech' incubator is promoting the dialogue between local care experts and digital start-ups to enable and enhance collaborative projects, which can modernise and assist professional care.

An important part of digitalisation is the use of virtual reality to developing learning tools for care workers. A 'blood glucose monitoring' VR learning case was developed by a local start up and a municipal care facility, demonstrating the promising potential of VR in nursing qualification.



Conclusions

The impact of Covid-19 on the local economy and labour markets forced cities to act fast to keep workers in employment. The short-term interventions together with the measures to support the long-term restructuring of economy are designed to foster an inclusive and sustainable recovery of labour markets. City actions led us to the following conclusions:

- Cities responded quickly to lockdown measures by **adapting their employment support** services to an online format. That way, local authorities were able to continue to provide assistance, even with growing unemployment. In addition to advice services and helplines, cities found innovative solutions to shift **skills training** to online platforms. Cities are looking into opportunities to scale-up these provisional projects and reform their employment support services to adapt to new realities in the job market.
- Cities have increased their efforts to provide both employers and employees with the tools needed to adapt to the digitalisation of the economy and to thrive in emerging sectors. Local strategies to **digitally skill and re-skill jobseekers** have been coupled with plans to improve **matchmaking** between businesses with staff shortages and the unemployed. Cities need increased access to funding to continue developing these projects and create local economies that are resilient and aligned with the digital transition.
- Cities invest in **life-long learning programmes** to ensure upskilling and reskilling opportunities that respond to the needs of the local economy and of workers at risk of losing their jobs due to the structural changes on labour markets.
- Cities work with the local community and stakeholders to support the emerging sectors and ensure that they **create quality jobs with decent working conditions**.
- Local authorities also **supported businesses** rapidly to assist the local economy and prevent excessive job losses. Financial support and suspension of rental payments were combined with strategies to quickly transfer economic activity online. Cities can benefit from increased access to funding to further support local businesses in adapting to contextual changes, as well as from capacity building on innovative ways to shift economic activity online.
- **Vulnerable groups** such as young people, older workers, women, minorities or the low-skilled received special attention from local support services to mitigate the devastating impact that Covid-19 could have on their employment and income. The recovery process must consider the vulnerability of certain groups, and allow cities to develop targeted measures and prevent increasing inequalities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.



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