

EU study shows COVID-19 has wiped out 6 million jobs



People wait outside a government-run job centre amid the coronavirus outbreak in Madrid. (Photo: Juan Medina/Reuters)

Brussels, March 13 (RHC)-- The first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic wiped out some six million jobs in the European Union, according to a study released in Brussels, with temporary contractors, young and female workers at times hit harder than in the 2008-09 financial crisis.

The Eurofound study said teleworking, short-time work schemes and other state support helped protect jobs but also meant more people slid into protracted professional inactivity rather than figuring in

unemployment statistics.

“There were 5.7 million fewer people in employment in the EU by spring 2020 than at the end of 2019, and 6.3 million fewer compared with the trend growth that could have been expected before the COVID-19 pandemic,” Eurofound said.

The Q4 2019 employment figure stood at 201 million workers, according to Eurofound, compared with some 450 million people living in the bloc. The corresponding change in the EU unemployment rate was more modest, from 6.6 percent to 6.7 percent.

“In the 12 months leading up to spring 2020, EU employment declined by 2.4%, the weekly hours of those still in work dropped by nearly one hour and the share of workers employed but not working more than doubled to 17%,” it said.

Eurofound, an EU agency dedicated to monitoring and improving living and working conditions in the 27-nation bloc, said the number of temporary contracts sank by 17 percent, with Spain, France, Poland, Italy and Greece particularly hit.

“Younger workers experienced the sharpest declines in employment,” said the report, stressing youth employment levels in the pandemic shrank more than during the financial crisis that started in 2008, risking another “lost generation.”

Unlike the financial and economic crisis more than 10 years ago, it added the pandemic disproportionately affected female-dominated sectors including accommodation, food and travel.

With about half of the EU workforce switching to telework, better-educated workers in urban centres were more likely to keep their jobs than others, further exacerbating inequalities.

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