

In this week's issue:

- **Europe:** Unions to push for sharp wage rises
- **Covid-19:** Over 60% of Europeans had Covid
- **UK:** TUC leader warns on the use of AI
- **Russia:** Yours for a rouble
- **Future Work:** A round-up of recent developments
- **Brexit:** How has it impacted UK citizens in Europe?
- **Hybrid Working:** New book explores options
- **BEERG Bytes:** Latest episode (#39) is on EWC Agreements Survey

Europe: Unions to push for sharp wage rises



According to Eurostat, the unemployment rate in the Eurozone was 6.8% in March, while inflation in April stood at 7.5%, the highest in decades. The combination of a tightening labour market and soaring inflation is pushing unions across Europe to demand pay rises that compensate for the rising cost of living.

"Let's be clear, workers are not the cause of inflation, they are its victims," Esther Lynch, deputy general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, told the *Financial Times*. *"Pay is at the top of our affiliates' agenda, as inflation is at its highest level for decades and it's clear that the cost of living is on an upward trajectory."*

In the fourth quarter of last year, eurozone wages rose at an annual rate of 1.4%, well below inflation of 4.6% during that time. That caused real hourly wages to fall 3%, the largest drop since comparable data began 14 years ago.

In France, the CGT has called for the minimum wage to rise to €2,000 per month from €1,645. The minimum wage has been raised three times in the past year, adding up to a total increase of 5.9%. CGT leader Philippe Martinez told *Le Parisien* paper that increasing it further was the best way to address France's *"social malaise."*

Germany's biggest union, IG Metall, said last week it was considering asking for an 8.2% rise for 85,000 iron and steel sector workers. Birgit Dietze, a senior IG Metall official, said: *"Our members rightly expect a significant increase in monthly wages in the face of sharply rising prices and high profits of steel companies."*

Covid-19: Over 60% of Europeans had Covid



"It is estimated that between 60% to 80% of the EU population has by now had COVID," EU health commissioner Stella Kyriakides told a news conference on Wednesday (27 April).

The EU public health agency said reported cases had covered about 30% of the European population so far, but if unreported infections were added, cases could be as high as 350 million, about 77% of the European population. But the Commissioner says that fresh COVID-19 surges are likely as the virus is expected to continue mutating, and therefore countries should have in place plans to shift back into emergency mode and should ramp up vaccinations.

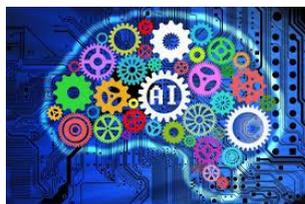
In a document outlining the strategy for the post-emergency phase of the pandemic, Brussels urged governments to continue pushing for the immunisation of the unvaccinated, especially children before the start of the new school term in the autumn. Immunisation rates are below 15% among children aged between 5 and 9, the youngest age group for which COVID-19 vaccines have been authorised in Europe. That compares to over 70% of teens aged 15 to 17, the document says.

The Commission also said it could back the development of new drugs against COVID-19, especially antivirals that are easier to store and administer. An interesting piece of research [here](#) reports on the difficulties unions have had in trying to balance competing demands from members around Covid policies. The authors note:

Many French unions opposed mandatory testing and the introduction of the health pass, sometimes even taking to the streets. In contrast, unions in Germany and Luxembourg agreed, if sometimes half-heartedly, to the introduction of the '3-G-Rule'—Geimpft, Genesen, Getestet—and associated pass, allowing only vaccinated, recovered or negatively tested workers in workplaces.

Unions' reticence towards mandatory testing for unvaccinated workers may be explained by the fact that such policies transferred responsibility for monitoring and sanctioning recalcitrant employees to employers. This rendered employers the only legitimate actor on workplace health and safety, instead of engaging workers' representatives or imposing policies in the name of public health.

UK: TUC leader warns on the use of AI



The general secretary of the UK Trades Union Congress (TUC) has told the BBC that with the rise of Artificial Intelligence in the workplace, employment rights have to keep pace with big changes. "So often we see those big decisions being taken by [employment] software that has discrimination written in. We've seen it in terms of race and gender discrimination, in terms of facial recognition, accents," Frances O'Grady said, adding "Huge decisions about performance at work, whether you even get work, whether you are fired [are] being taken on this basis, so we want the right to human review."

In several pieces of proposed legislation, including the flagship Directive on AI governance, the European Union is pushing for extensive employee information and consultation rights on the use of algorithms in human resource decision making.

A [report](#) from the European Parliament says that the EU is lagging behind the United States and China in the global race for Artificial Intelligence, warning that such a situation creates geopolitical risks given the strategic importance of these new technological systems.

"The EU is still far from fulfilling its aspirations of becoming competitive in AI on a global level," the Parliament said, urging EU member states to increase investment in research, infrastructure, education, and training in the field of AI.

We will have an extensive discussion on AI and human resource decision-making at our BEERG Network meeting in Brussels on September 28/29.

Russia: Yours for a rouble



As Western sanctions increasingly make doing business with or in Russia close to impossible, many major multinationals are looking for exit strategies that limit their losses. However, available strategies are few and far between.

French newspapers report that Renault is in talks to sell its majority stake in Lada carmaker Avtovaz to a Russian state research institute for one rouble. Renault would have the option of a buyback within five or six years, though the price of any transaction would be affected by any investments made by Russia in the meantime.

Renault is one of the western multinationals most deeply entrenched in Russia, with local manufacturing operations and a workforce of about 40,000. Russia accounted for about 10% of its turnover and half its automotive operating margin in 2021. The company has continued to pay staff in Russia, although operations are at a standstill due to a lack of parts.

Future Work: A round-up of recent developments



Last week, Brian Chesky, CEO of Airbnb, [tweeted](#) that “*Airbnb employees can live and work anywhere.*” The same week, London law firm Stephenson Harwood offered its staff the option to work from home - if they take a 20% pay cut. The company’s remote working policy says employees must be in the office at least three days a week, unless they are willing to see their salaries cut by a fifth – in which case they will be able to work from home permanently.

The new policy, which is set to come into force next month, will require homeworkers to go into the office for just one day each month. Stephenson Harwood says it does not expect many people to take up the offer to work remotely full-time.

MEANWHILE there are suggestions that there may not be enough remote-work jobs for everyone who wants one. Data from job sites Indeed and LinkedIn show worker interest in jobs with a remote component is outpacing the number of such available roles in many instances. Even as remote job opportunities have surged during the pandemic, “*the share of job searches that contain keywords related to remote work has risen even more in most large economies,*” observes Pawel Adrjan, head of Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) research at Indeed. While Mary Kate Fields, data communications manager at LinkedIn, says:

“If we look at the US overall, searches for remote work have gone up four-and-a half times as a share of all searches since 2019, and the share of remote job postings has gone up by only 3.2 times... The key takeaway here is that the supply of, and employees’ demand for, remote jobs have both grown rapidly over the past two years, but demand has grown faster.”

Lisbon has come out top in a remote work ranking for executives, according to research by real estate broker Savills, which rated 15 prime residential markets by their appeal to long-term remote workers. “The pandemic has been a catalyst for executives to make the jump from office life,” observed Paul Tostevin, director of world research at Savills. “Lisbon offers the advantages of city living, and the benefits of being in the European Union.”

Ricardo Garcia, director of residential at Savills in Lisbon, added: “The area is becoming more and more international and I don’t see Lisbon or Portugal slowing down anytime soon.” Miami is placed second in Savills’ index: the Florida city is a popular destination for buyers relocating from north-eastern U.S. states. Dubai also scored highly alongside Barbados, Barcelona, and Dubrovnik. No Asian cities appeared in the ranking.



In a post on [Social Europe](#), [Antonio Alosi](#) and [Luisa Corazza](#) argue that “many workers have chosen to move from cities to low-density areas in their home regions or to migrate to sunnier climes, thereby benefiting from the availability of ample space, improved working conditions and a better quality of life. Over the last few years, the authors say, “such [‘south working’](#)—remote working from rural and inland areas—has become widely practised.”

Brexit: How has it impacted UK citizens in Europe?



The first major post-Brexit [study](#) of UK citizens living in the EU has revealed its profound impact on their lives, with many expressing serious concerns over their loss of free movement and voting rights, and their changed perception of Britain.

The survey, of 1,328 British nationals across the continent, showed that if “*the public narrative suggests Brexit is done and dusted, it has brought deep transformations to the lives of British citizens in the EU and EEA*”, the study’s co-lead, said. “*The long tail of Brexit is evident in its continuing impacts both on the way they live their lives, and in its lasting significance for their sense of identity and belonging*,” said Michaela Benson, a sociology professor at Lancaster University.

Hybrid Working: New book explores options



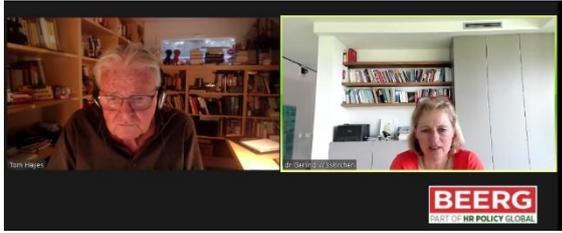
Thomas Zinsli
Hybrid Working
A New Kind of Work Experience

Hybrid Working is here to stay, writes [Thomas Zinsli](#) in this short, new book which explores the issue. Thomas, well known to us in BEERG, says the message from workforces around the world is clear: “*They want the flexibility to work from home as well as more personal connection with their co-workers. How can I find my most productive personal hybrid arrangement?*”

So... how do leaders enable this shift while scaling up Hybrid Working in their businesses? How does Hybrid Working impact jobs, company cultures, and even industries?

It is a good buy at €13.99. It can be purchased [here](#)

BEERG Bytes: Latest episode (#39) is on EWC Agreements Survey



In the latest [BEERG Byte #39](#) Tom chats with our good friend [Dr Gerlind Wisskirchen](#), of C/M/S/-HS about a recent study her team conducted on the content of EWC agreements.

The survey looked at country of jurisdiction, the number of representatives of EWCs, employee thresholds for EWC seats, budgets for experts, amongst other things. They also discuss the new German Whistleblowing legislation, and the agenda of the SPD/FDP/Green government.

It is available on [YouTube](#) or at: www.beerg.com/beergbytes and also as a Podcast via your favourite [Podcast](#) search engine – search for “*BEERG Bytes*”. See: [Spotify](#) / [Google Podcasts](#) / [Apple Podcasts](#) / [Anchor RSS](#)

THE BEERG AGENDA:

HR Policy India: Turn Talent into Competitive Advantage: May 11 1500H CET/6:30 PM India Time

Join DP Singh to gain valuable insights from member CHROs and experts on developing strategies to attract, retain and develop top talent and help accelerate business results

[BOOK Webinar](#)

Perspectives on Diversity/ Inclusion in Asia Pacific Webinar: May 25 @ 10am Beijing Time

Join this informative discussion on how the perspectives of Asia Pacific can be integrated into an organization's D&I strategy, with a focus on Race and Culture in Asia Pacific. This will be an open Web session, with opportunity to ask questions.

[Book Webinar](#)

BEERG/CMS Labor Relations Workshop CMS office in Frankfurt, May 25 @ 1000H

The rescheduled annual CMS/BEERG Global Labor Relations Seminar is on Wed, May 25th from 10am to 4pm, at the CMS office at Neue Mainzer Str. Frankfurt. Email Tom for details.

[EMAIL Tom Hayes](#)

BEERG Members' Annual Network Summit Hotel Estela, Sitges Spain: Jun 15 – 17

Our June Summit will have 4 working sessions:

- *EU Employment and Labour Law Legal Landscape,*
- *Disrupting the Disruptors: A Company Case Study,*
- *From the Fax to the Cloud - From Working 9-to-5 to Timeless Work,*
- *Political Perspectives: Europe: Ukraine/Russia; post-election France; A US view*

The full agenda, with the list of guest speakers, is available [online](#)

[Book June meeting](#)

Executive Training: Fundamentals of Global LR Webinar June 28 – 30

This course of three sessions, over three days, explores the strategic mindset and thought process of a successful global labor relations executive. This course is not an introduction to LR principles, it examines the strategic awareness needed to lead global labor relations.

[Book June Webinar](#)

*BEERG/HR Policy Global Members can self-register online for these events via the links supplied. Members who get the "No Tickets Available for Purchase" message online should contact [Derek](#).

BEERG Dates for your Diary:

Date	Event	Booking Links	Venue
May 5 (Today)	BEERG Webinar: in partnership with Flichy Grangé: France's New Whistleblowing Law	Book Webinar	Webinar on Zoom
May 11	HR Policy India: Turn Talent into Competitive Advantage	Book Webinar	Webinar on Zoom
May 25	Webinar: Perspectives on Diversity/ Inclusion in Asia Pacific	Book Webinar	Webinar on Zoom
May 25	BEERG/CMS Labor Relations Workshop	Email For Info	CMS, Neue Mainzer Str. 2-4, 60311 Frankfurt, Germany
Jun 15 – 17	BEERG Members' Annual Network Summit	Book June Summit	Sitges/Barcelona, Spain
June 28 – 30	BEERG Training: Fundamentals of Global Labor Relations: A Training Program for HR Executives	Book June Webinar	Webinar on Zoom
Sept 29/30	BEERG Members' Network Meeting	Book Sept Meeting	Brussels, Belgium
Oct 18 - 21	BEERG Training: "Managing European Employee Relations in Post-Covid Times"		Sitges/Barcelona, Spain

Part of the

BEERG

HRPA HR POLICY ASSOCIATION
HR POLICY GLOBAL
network

Phone: + 33 684752 122 | email: tom.hayes@beerg.com | website: www.beerg.com