

**Applauses are not enough.
A call for an action week**

The Framework:

During the hardest months of the pandemic, health and social services workers have been essential to keep hospitals and other key care services functioning. In those months, many promises were made and it has taken only few months to see how slowly governments, employers and European institutions are acting to keep their promises and recognize the role of workers in our hospitals. Despite our efforts, safety and working conditions are not assured for all the workforce in the sector.

For many years we have been denouncing the significant under-investment in, and under-prioritization of, health and social care systems across Europe, and because of which our systems have become more vulnerable when an unexpected event like the COVID-19 pandemic happened. This manifested itself in different ways in different contexts, including poor infrastructure, inadequate equipment and under staffing.

Many trade unions are also reporting that some governments are punishing workers who voice their concerns about working conditions that may threaten their lives.

As healthcare and social services unions, our voice is clear: if we want to strengthen our systems, it is essential to start by recognizing the role of our doctors, nurses and healthcare assistants, taking their health and lives seriously in its safety and pay them properly.

The last discussion on the EU funding for healthcare showed this is not yet acknowledged, and we will act together to remind everyone that the difference between a devastating pandemic and a well managed disease are the frontline workers dealing with it.

This action week will also show that a solid and united trade union front is emerging from this crisis to claim better lives and working conditions, and it will be a wake up call for those that forgot their promises. We are determined to commit Europe, and in particular the European Union, to do whatever it takes to protect healthcare: This week will show our determination to walk our path in this direction.

Objectives of the action week:

For the first time in the history of this sector many, if not all, of the unions are engaged in collective bargaining and actions as a consequence of the pandemic and the lessons learnt during the crisis. We need to seize this opportunity and mutually strengthen our demands through international action. The action week will give the possibility to provide a wider framework to the mobilizations and activities to unions organizing healthcare and social services workers. Indeed, the possibility to coordinate and concentrate mobilizations and actions into a week will provide us with an unprecedented opportunity to mutually nurture our national and European priorities and send jointly a strong message of solidarity, unity and cohesion.

The organization of such action days will allow us 1) to support and express solidarity with those unions facing difficulties in getting their demands across; 2) to increase solidarity among workers in Europe; and 3) to bolster our mutual demands, using the pressure of public opinion at both national and European levels.

This should include a review into whether the rights of health and essential workers - including the right to just and favorable conditions of work, and the right to freedom of expression – were adequately protected.

Key demands of the action:

The message of the action week needs to be very clear and straight forward: governments, employers and local authorities need to keep the promises made during the pandemic. At all levels, from local to national up to European.

Further to the questions that each affiliate will address at national level, from all over Europe we will demand:

- To keep the promises made during the pandemic to healthcare and social services workers, including increase of salary and the right to just and favorable conditions of work, and the right to freedom of expression
- Adequate compensation for all frontline workers in these sectors who have contracted COVID-19 as a result of work-related activities. We will also demand investigation into cases where workers have faced reprisals for raising health and safety concerns, and provide effective remedy to those who have been unjustly treated, including reinstatement of workers who have lost their jobs
- To ask the EU to contribute to increasing the safety and preparedness of our workforce, against the cuts to the EU4health programme and to ensure that the nextgen EU funding caters the needs of our health and social care systems
- To member states a significant increase in staffing; crucial in terms of capacity to deal with a second wave, or future pandemics, and to defend the right to stabilization for those young and precarious workers recruited to deal with the pandemic in the last months.

Building alliances:

An action week can really deploy its potential if a large front of organizations, associations and individuals representing different stakeholders join forces to claim better healthcare for all. During the last months we managed to elicit the praise and the recognition of different segments of our society, now it is time to show that our demands are also shared and can become the stepping stone of the reorganization of healthcare following the COVID-19 outbreak.

For this reason, the appeal calling the week will be open to be discussed and signed by different stakeholders, both at national and European level.

How the week will be articulated:

Before the action week:

- September will be dedicated to agree on the platform and to collect an overview of the situation at national level of what promises have been kept, and where governments and hospitals are still ignoring worker's demands. Out of this, we will publish on the website a sort of black book of the broken promises that will also provide a "fil rouge" connecting national demands.
- We will launch officially the appeal calling the mobilization and the initiatives of the week during a press conference
- From mid September, where the action will be announced, a series of initiatives that will keep the attention and lead towards the action week will take place. The initiatives can be from online meetings, to discussions, to collecting signatures and will take place both at national and European level.

The action week

- The action week will take place from the 27 – 30 October. The week will see coordinated actions all over Europe, each according to the different claims at national level with a fil rouge set by the appeal at European level.
- During the week, different initiatives can be organized: mobilizations/assemblies/workshops/actions/flash mobs, either in the workplaces or elsewhere, to



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raise the awareness among workers and citizens of the need to preserve our public healthcare systems and strengthen the provision of social care for all citizens in Europe.

- Thursday 29th October will be the central day of the mobilization week: it will also coincide with the ITUC Global Day of Action on “invest in care”. During Thursday, we will seek the possibility to organize an action in Brussels and in other main European cities, building also on the mobilizations and demos organized in those months.