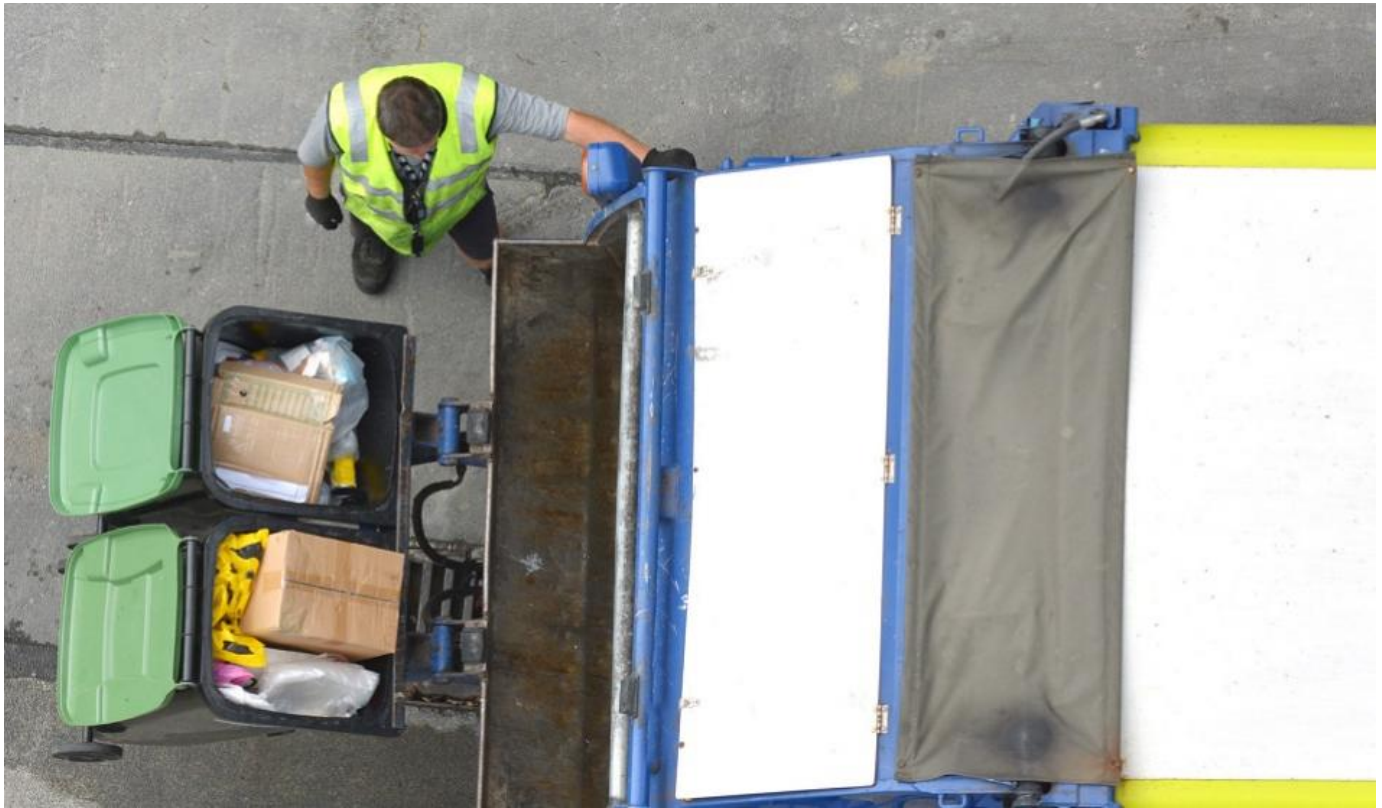


## Public utility workers: The unseen frontline responders in the Corona Crisis



(23 April 2020) The coronavirus pandemic has now infected more than 2 million people worldwide and caused over 145,000 deaths. Like so many other key workers, workers in the waste collection, water and energy distribution sectors are risking their lives by exposing themselves to the virus while doing their job to ensure the continuation of our essential services. With [announcements this week that minute traces of SARS-CoV-2 have been found in waste water in Paris](#), it is more urgent than ever to provide utility workers with adequate protective equipment and a safe working environment.

Throughout the pandemic, medical staff, grocery store workers and police have rightly been recognised and applauded for their effort and sacrifice. Often forgotten however, is the essential public services provided for by workers in the energy, water and waste sectors. With almost all countries under lockdown and most people stuck at home, energy, waste collection and running water are more important than ever, and the risks being taken by those who ensure these services must be

acknowledged.

In addition to the tragic death toll, the coronavirus pandemic has revealed the cracks in a system devastated by years of austerity. The desperate need for investment in public services can no longer be ignored, and public service workers can not continue to bare the brunt of a collapsing system. It is outrageous that some utility workers, who are essential in delivering public services, are not protected by necessary health and safety measures, such as adequate protective equipment and a safe working environment. Protective equipment must be made available for utility workers immediately, and all national and regional authorities must address as a matter of urgency the risks posed by waste water contaminated with SARS-CoV-2.

EPSU calls for an end of the governing of our public utilities by the logic of profit. The well-being and common interests of society must come first. In times of crisis it becomes clear that public ownership of utilities is the only safe alternative. European, national policymakers and utility operators must learn from the current crisis and improve health and safety for utility workers.

EPSU extends its sincere gratitude to all public utility workers who are dedicating their lives to help others and demand that they receive the support they deserve.

For background:

[Sewage workers in Paris worry about contamination with COVID19](#)

[Italian waste workers concerned as COVID19 crisis shows fragmented services, problems with procurement focused on lowest costs, lack of investment and resources](#)

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