

Workers Memorial Day 2020: A commemoration of workers who have lost their lives to Coronavirus and a call for action



(April 24, 2020) The 28th April marks International Workers Memorial Day, a day for unions and workers to commemorate those who have been killed and injured due to their work. This year the day is especially poignant, as we will remember a devastating number of workers who have lost their lives due to exposure to Coronavirus at work.

As the majority of Europe has been in lockdown throughout this unprecedented crisis, public service workers and many others have risked their lives to ensure that essential services are kept running. Tragically, a number of those on the front-line have paid the ultimate price. At EPSU we will hold a minute of silence on International Workers Memorial Day to remember the sacrifices they have made.

Yet the 28th April is not only a day of remembrance, but also a day of action to fight

for the rights of workers around the world whose health and safety is jeopardised. Despite the gravity of the COVID 19 pandemic, many workers in essential services still do not have adequate protective equipment. And it is not only medical staff who are exposed to the virus, but also utility workers, other emergency services, cleaners, prison guards and many more. Staff shortages and inadequate facilities and budgets, as well as the emotional strain of the crisis, also put the psychological well-being of front-line workers at risk.

The public applause around Europe for essential workers is an excellent show of gratitude for risks they expose themselves to in order to protect us all. Yet applause will not prevent these occupational risks taking the lives of even more front-line workers. It is essential that all existing health and safety laws and collective agreements are fully and properly implemented. As a matter of urgency, EPSU calls for the recognition of Coronavirus as an occupational disease in order to ensure insurance coverage for those exposed.

In observance of International Workers Memorial Day this year, [EPSU has published a joint statement with other European trade union federations](#), and we join unions around the world to 'Remember the dead – Fight for the living'.

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