

EPSU, the European trade union federations and ETUC demand COVID-19 is recognised as occupation disease



European Federation
of Building
and Woodworkers



(27 April 2020) Across Europe workers are continuing our vital services and industries. Ten thousands of workers are getting infected with the Coronavirus and get COVID-19. Not always is the full protection available and not always is social distancing possible. Workers end up in hospital and intensive care, and some workers die. Therefore we are demanding that COVID-19 is recognised as an occupational disease. Governments must be required to report and record work-related cases. Many affiliates report that this is not done at the moment. We want that compensation schemes are set up to assist victims of work-related COVID-19 sickness as well as their families.

On the occasion of International Workers Memorial Day, on 28 April 2020 we call up on the Commission to protect workers and ensure that COVID-19 is recognised as an occupational disease. This can be done by revising the [Commission Recommendation](#) (2003/670/EC) concerning the European schedule of occupational

diseases to specifically include COVID-19 as applying to all workers who are currently disproportionately exposed to infection. The Recommendation does not cover adequately the different groups of workers exposed to COVID-19 as an occupational risk due to its pandemic dimension. Practically: where someone's work assignment places her or him at risk of exposure to coronavirus, which is higher than for the general population, COVID-19 should be recognised and compensated as an occupational disease. The inclusion of a rebuttal presumption in the case of COVID-19 infections will mean that the exposure will be presumed to have arisen out of a person's work.

This is a first step. Workers should be focused on recovering, not worrying about whether they will face financial ruin for getting sick from work. European trade union federations stand ready to work with the Commission to further articulate this list to ensure that all workers are protected. This will also include establishing the types of work situations and tasks relating to job functions that lead to coronavirus exposure.

Across Europe collective bargaining has shown to protect workers' lives during this Coronavirus pandemic. In the sectors and enterprises with strong collective bargaining robust measures have been agreed with employers to protect workers' safety as well as their economic security. But too many workers have been forced to work and risk their health because they do not have access to full employment rights, social protection and representation. This must be remembered as we emerge from this immediate crisis and secure employment with robust sectoral collective bargaining must be supported unequivocally.

[For the letter of the joint trade union federations](#)

[For more information on Workers memorial day](#)

For more information on precarious work from a recent report of European Foundation of Living and Working Conditions: [Labour market change: Trends and policy approaches towards flexibilisation](#)

From the conclusions:

- The growth of different types of non-standard contracts is leading to deeper divisions in EU labour markets between well-protected workers and those with limited access to social protection and employment rights. This is particularly the case for the growing numbers of those in 'compound non-standard'

employment (having a mix of non-standard work statuses: for example, temporary and part-time, self-employed and part-time).Share

- The current rise in precarious jobs will require policy solutions to support workers with limited access to social protection and representation. This is all the more relevant in the context of the emerging impact of the coronavirus outbreak, which poses particular existential risks to many precarious and self-employed workers
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