

## Deaths of workers in Waste Management Sector in one week: Lack of compliance in Health and Safety



(26 February 2020) EPSU statement - In the week beginning 17th February, there were three workers deaths in the waste management sector in Europe. In Portugal, a sanitation worker in the collection of solid waste for the municipality of Montalvo passed away following an accident at work. In Spain, two workers were crushed by a landslide at the Zaldibar landfill in the Basque region. In response to all three of these tragic and preventable deaths, both the states and the employers have refused to accept responsibility for their failings.

In Spain, Verter Recycling had been uncooperative with inspectors and had received low grades from the Environmental Ministry for enforcing the health and safety standards. Furthermore, the Deputy Minister of Environment in the Basque government, Elena Moreno, sent an email to staff to “be silent” on the issues surrounding the Zaldibar landfill, which was denounced by the ELA union. In

Portugal, STAL union had previously denounced the failure of the government inspection agent (ACT) to monitor companies' compliance with safety standards.

These deplorable events show that the health and safety of workers in the waste management sector continues to be ignored by governments, employers and international organisations. Both the World Health Organization and the European Commission have failed to recognise this issue in recent reports. EPSU condemns the ignorance of governments and international organisations towards the health and safety of waste management workers.

EPSU calls on the European Commission and the members of the European Parliament to tackle the issues of health and safety, training and respect for collective bargaining in the upcoming Circular Economy package. The risk of an accident at work is 2.5 times higher in the waste management sector compared to the average of all other sectors. As the leading European organisation of waste workers, E EPSU expresses its support and solidarity to the colleagues and families of those who passed away.

EPSU demands immediate action to prevent further accidents in the sector.

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