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[Press release](#) | 11.06.2020

Commission agrees to additional protections for frontline workers

COVID-19

Today (11 June), Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights declared in the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs that COVID-19 will be classified as Group 3 Biological Agent. Member States will need to ensure written procedures for all workers potentially exposed to COVID-19 and the Commission is envisaging a revision of the Biological Agents Directive 2000/54.

Member States will be required to include written instructions for workers in order to protect them in the workplace. The Commission will report back to the European Parliament on this revision by the end of 2020. This follows the demands of the Greens/EFA group to improve protections for frontline workers potentially exposed to the virus through their roles.

Petra De Sutter MEP, Greens/EFA Member of the Employment and Social Affairs committee, comments:

"The obligation for employers to provide written instructions is crucial to protect the rights of vulnerable and precarious workers. This is vital to support those frontline workers who are exposed to the Corona virus in the workplace. Workers need these additional written guarantees while the virus has a high reproduction rate and while there is currently no effective treatment or vaccine."

"The Biological Agents Directive needs a general revision as it is clearly not properly adapted to pandemics. We welcome that the Commission has heard our call to amend it without delay as an important step to protect workers better in the future."

"The Directive applies to all workers, not only those who work directly with COVID-19-patients like health and care professionals, but also workers in the frontline in food-processing, retail sector, transport. Frontline workers are often women and low-paid jobs. Additional protections are essential to avert enlarging social inequalities."

More:

- The Greens/EFA group are calling for the Commission to make occupational health and safety

(OHS) a top priority this year, by adapting also the OSH "Framework Directive" and project higher ambitions in the new Strategy for 2021-2027.

- Greens/EFA have been asking more legal certainty to Commissioner Schmit since 3 June, the day that the European Commission published its draft proposal following the Technical Progress Committee (TPC)'s decision of 27 April and 14 May.
- Council and Parliament had one month to object the draft proposal of the Commission on a limited number of grounds under the urgent Regulatory Scrutiny Procedure.
- Having the guarantees of written procedures and a revision of the Directive, an objection has not been proven necessary.
- Without the objection, the amended Directive is automatically adopted. Member States have a maximum of five months for the implementation.

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Petra De Sutter

Member

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