

People go to work to make a living – to provide for themselves, their family and their loved ones.

Every working day across the European Union twelve working people do not come home from work - because they have died at work. Far from earning a living, work has killed them, and their families suffer emotionally, financially and in many other ways.

Today on **International Workers Memorial Day** – when we remember those killed or injured at work – we urge the European Union, member state governments and employers to bring an end to deaths at work. We call for zero death at work.

**Zero death at work is not a utopian dream. The trend in fatal workplace accidents is down and eradication of fatal accidents is achievable.**

But while fatal accidents are declining, **occupational diseases are increasing**. Some 100,000 workers die every year from occupational cancer due to exposure to hazardous substances. Long working hours and psychological pressure at work cause heart-disease, stroke, depression, and suicide. Bad posture, repetitive movement and heavy lifting cause backpain and other 'musculoskeletal' disorders and in turn cause depression and people being unable to work.

**New challenges** for health and safety are posed by extreme weather and temperatures from climate change, and new forms of work away from the traditional workplace such as rapidly increasing work from home and platform work. COVID has shown that the workplace is a major source of contagion, has led to the death of many thousands of workers, and we must be better prepared in work and elsewhere for future pandemics.

The EU's current health and safety strategy says "All efforts must be deployed to reduce work-related deaths as much as possible, in line with a Vision Zero approach to work-related deaths". This is good, but the actions promised in it will not achieve zero deaths.

**We call on the European Union, its member state governments, and employers to genuinely commit, and take the actions needed, to achieve zero death at work.** Europe needs much more to "walk the walk" than "talk the talk".

This means a concerted joined-up effort to

- Prevent **workplace accidents and occupational diseases**, stopping exposure to hazardous including cancer-causing substances and be ready for pandemic
- Make **physical and mental health** of workers the point of departure when organizing work and designing the workplace.

This will require action at EU, national, sectoral and company level, with legislative as well as other initiatives involving trade unions and employers: including increased education, training, monitoring prevention, protection, reporting, inspection, enforcement and penalties.

**We expect and demand such action to be delivered by the next European Commission and European Parliament from 2024, in addition to the legislative action to be taken by the Commission in the current term.**

**Zero  
deaths  
by 2030.**