

A new EU strategic framework on health and safety at work post 2020 (including a better protection of workers from exposure to harmful substances, stress at work and repetitive motion injuries)

2021/2165(INI) - 09/02/2022 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Marianne VIND (S&D, DK) on a new EU strategic framework on health and safety at work post 2020 (including better protection of workers from exposure to harmful substances, stress at work and repetitive motion injuries).

Members welcomed the Commission's strategic framework but regret that the level of ambition of this strategy on safety and health at work does not match the objective of the **Vision Zero approach to work-related accidents and illnesses**. The Commission is called upon to come forward with proposals that match this ambition.

The report called on the Commission and the Member States to increase the priority given to strategies such as **strengthening labour inspectorates**, national health and safety services and dialogue with the social partners, to ensure that all workers, regardless of the type or size of the company employing them, enjoy the highest possible level of health and safety protection.

The Commission is called on, *inter alia*, to:

- increase its ambitions on combating work-related **cancer** in the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan;
- ensure that any proposal to revise the exposure limit values for **lead** and its compounds promotes equal protection for all workers, irrespective of gender;
- raise its ambitions and present a European strategy for the total elimination of **asbestos** and, as a matter of priority, update the exposure limits for asbestos which should be set at 0.001 fibres/cm³ (1000 fibres/m³);
- include the right to disconnect in the strategic framework for safety and health at work;
- present a directive to effectively prevent **psychosocial risks** in the workplace, such as anxiety, depression, burnout and stress, including risks caused by structural problems such as work organisation;
- revise the 2003 Commission Recommendation on the European Schedule of Occupational Diseases by adding work-related musculoskeletal disorders, work-related mental disorders, in particular depression, burnout, anxiety and stress, all asbestos-related diseases, skin cancers and rheumatic and chronic inflammation;
- mainstream the gender dimension and take account of gender differences in all occupational health and safety measures;

- developing strategies to prepare for an ageing workforce, a higher prevalence of chronically ill workers and the need to adapt the workplace to the needs of **disabled workers**, and to actively support rehabilitation and non-discrimination;
- improve the working conditions of platform workers by ensuring that they are entitled to compensation for occupational accidents and diseases, and to social protection, including sickness and disability insurance;
- ensure that all workers with an employment contract or relationship, including atypical workers, as well as genuine and bogus self-employed and mobile workers, are covered by occupational health and safety legislation and policies;
- include health and safety in relevant EU strategies and policies on **green and digital transitions**, including on artificial intelligence (AI);
- urgently assess new and emerging risks associated with **climate change** on occupational health and safety.

Preparedness plan for future health crises: lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic

The report stressed that it is essential to draw lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and to be **better prepared for future health crises**. It welcomed the Commission's intention to launch an evaluation of the effects of the pandemic and the effectiveness of European and national occupational safety and health frameworks.

The Commission is called on:

- undertake without delay a targeted review of Directive 2000/54/EC on biological agents at work, drawing on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- provide adequate funding for the strengthening of research and data collection, both at EU and national level, on health and safety at work;
- propose a legislative framework for the establishment of EU-wide minimum requirements for **telework**, without prejudice to the employment conditions of teleworkers;
- propose, in consultation with the social partners, a directive establishing minimum standards and conditions to ensure that all workers are able to effectively exercise their right to disconnect;
- launch urgent action to improve the employment, health, working and safety conditions of **mobile and migrant workers**, such as frontier, posted and seasonal workers, who have been exposed to unhealthy or hazardous living and working conditions during the pandemic;
- present a legislative proposal for a **European social security pass** for all mobile workers and non-EU nationals who are covered by EU rules on intra-EU mobility.

Implementation and enforcement

The report called on Member States to ensure **adequate funding of national labour inspectorates** and to implement the ILO recommendation of one labour inspector for every 10 000 workers, so that prompt and

effective inspections are carried out and all forms of abuse are stopped. It called on the Commission and the Member States to streamline occupational health and safety standards in all policies and to improve preventive measures and the enforcement of existing occupational health and safety rules and legislation.

Member States should report back on the targets set out in their national strategies for health and safety at work and ensure adequate funding to support the implementation of these strategies.