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) - 10/03/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 551 votes to 30, with 110 abstentions, a resolution 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 recalled that more than **200 000 workers** die each year from work-related illnesses, this data does not include all accidents caused by undeclared work. According to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), 20 % of jobs in Europe were of ‘poor quality’ and put the physical or mental health of workers at increased risk.

Raising the level of ambition of the strategy on safety and health at work

While welcoming the Commission's strategic framework, Parliament called on the Commission to come forward with proposals that match the ‘**Vision Zero**’ ambition on work-related accidents and illnesses.

Members called for (i) a **roadmap** for reducing accidents and deaths at work, with adequate EU and national funding to complete the transition towards zero fatalities; (ii) increased priority to be given to strategies such as strengthening **labour inspectorates**, national health and safety services and dialogue with the social partners; (iii) ambitious implementation and monitoring of the new strategic framework, including in the light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; (iv) regular updates of the strategic framework and improvement of current national strategies in line with changing labour markets and the dual green and digital transitions.

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;

- propose a broader and more comprehensive directive on the prevention and management of work-related **musculoskeletal disorders and rheumatic diseases**;

- 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

Parliament supported the call for Member States to develop preparedness plans for future crises in their national occupational safety and health strategies, in consultation with the national social partners. It stressed the need to establish effective mechanisms for coordinating these plans at EU level. It also welcomed the Commission's intention to launch an assessment of the effects of the pandemic in order to develop emergency procedures and guidelines for the rapid deployment of measures in future health crises.

Members called on the Commission and Member States to encourage companies to take action to promote the health of workers, using the logistical resources at their disposal, making recommendations on healthy lifestyles, encouraging physical activity through access to dedicated areas on their premises.

Recalling the numerous cases of violation of workers' rights during the COVID-19 pandemic, the resolution called on the Commission to launch action to improve the employment, health, working and safety conditions of **mobile and migrant workers**, such as frontier, posted and seasonal workers. The Commission should present a legislative proposal for a **European social security passport** for all mobile workers and non-EU nationals who are covered by EU rules on intra-EU mobility.

Implementation and enforcement

Parliament 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.

Lastly, EU-OSHA should be strengthened to better promote healthy and safe workplaces throughout the EU and continue to develop initiatives to improve workplace prevention in all sectors of activity.