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From **industriAll European Trade Union**

COVID-19: the EU needs a collective response and workers must be protected

Europe has become the epicenter of the pandemic, affecting all EU Member States. The EU must now respond swiftly, strongly and in a coordinated manner to protect its people from COVID-19 and avoid a major economic recession.

The emergency package presented by the EU Commission on 13 March is a step in the right direction. In line with measures taken by some national governments, it is essential that the EU adopts an umbrella emergency plan. This plan must secure the necessary sanitary supplies to the EU health systems; guarantee that Member States can fully use the flexibility of the State Aid and the Stability and Growth Pact Frameworks to boost the economy; support people whose income and jobs are affected and support impacted companies. The EU must give an answer at the scale of this global threat!

Workers must be protected, and employers must take their responsibility towards them. Not every worker has the possibility to work from home. Industrial workers on the production line cannot work remotely and employers must take appropriate measures to protect them. Failure of employers to do so, will put them in danger and this is unacceptable. Employers must focus their efforts on prevention including social distancing at the workplace, adapting working time to prevent workers from commuting during rush hours, etc. Social partners at all levels should discuss and agree on urgent measures to protect the health of workers in the workplace. If they fail to do so, public authorities must step in.

Public authorities should fully compensate the salaries of workers that are required to go into quarantine and have no possibility to work from home. Public authorities must also extend sick pay to every worker. With the explosion of precarious work over the past decades, many workers do not actually qualify for sick pay. Thus, many potentially exposed workers will continue working rather than voluntarily self-isolate. We cannot accept that the most vulnerable workers will risk infection by working and contribute to spreading the virus, because they remain outside of the scope of emergency measures. The EU must guarantee that regardless of the form of work, every worker is entitled to sick pay from day one with full compensation for the loss of income.

In the coming weeks, industriAll Europe will carefully monitor the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the industrial sectors and industrial workers.