

CONFEDERATION

SYNDICAT

EUROPEAEN

TRADE UNION



European webinar 'Extreme heat in the workplace

Klimaatverbond, 10th June 2026

THE URGENT NEED FOR ACTION

- 42% Increase in heat-related workplace fatalities in the EU since 2000.
- 60% More workers exposed to heatwaves over the last 20 years.
- Climate change is no longer an emerging risk; it is a daily reality for millions of European workers.

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GAPS IN THE CURRENT FRAMEWORK

- **Fragmented Protection:** Existing OSH Framework and Workplace Directives do not specify measurable triggers or physiological safeguards for heat.
- **Excluded Sectors:** The current Workplace Directive excludes critical settings like agriculture, forestry, and means of transportation.
- **Voluntary Limits:** Guidance alone is insufficient. Employers often refuse to include heat-specific measures in collective agreements.

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CORE DEMAND: A BINDING EU DIRECTIVE

- Establish binding maximum working temperatures tailored to sector-specific conditions.
- Ensure consistent protection across every Member State, overcoming current fragmented national rules.
- Provide enforceable obligations for all employers to implement preventive heat-management plans.
- Include heat risk prevention within the forthcoming Quality Jobs Act.

MAXIMUM WORKING TEMPERATURES

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RISK ASSESSMENT & STOP APPROACH

- Substitution / elimination: Rescheduling work to cooler times of day (night or early morning) where possible and with trade unions' agreement.
- Technical Measures: Provision of shade, cooling stations, ventilation, and insulation of heat sources.
- Organisational Measures: Acclimatisation programmes, cooling breaks, and self-pacing of work intensity.
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GOVERNANCE & COLLECTIVE RIGHTS

- Employers must develop Heat-Management Plans in meaningful collaboration with trade unions.
- Full involvement of Workers' Safety Representatives (WSR).
- Education for workers on recognizing heat stress symptoms.
- Tailored protocols for extreme weather alerts from meteorological institutes.

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KEY EMPLOYER OBLIGATIONS

- Hydration: Mandatory access to free, cool drinking water.
- Rest Areas: Provision of shaded or cooled rest environments.
- Acclimatisation: Gradual exposure for new or returning workers (crucial for migrant/seasonal staff).
- Commuting: Risk assessments must include commuting and telework settings.

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RIGHTS & HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

- Right to Withdraw: Workers must have the right to withdraw their labour with no detrimental consequences if exposed to immediate heat risks or if temperature limits are exceeded.
- Medical Monitoring: Regular, targeted medical check-ups to prevent underreporting of heat-related diseases, cardiovascular strain, and kidney conditions.

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INCLUSIVE SCOPE & PPE STANDARDS

- Broadest Possible Application
 - The Directive must cover all sectors, specifically including:
 - Domestic workers (historically excluded).
 - Seasonal and migrant workers in agriculture.
 - Outdoor delivery and transport services.
- Gender-Sensitive PPE: Personal Protective Equipment must be designed for all body types and prevent additional thermal strain. Employers must provide high-protection sunscreens as OSH equipment.

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ENFORCEMENT & INSPECTORATES

- Resources: Significant increase in funding and staffing for national Labour Inspectorates.
- Training: Specialized training for inspectors to evaluate heat risk assessments and management plans.
- Sanctions: Effective, proportionate, and dissuasive penalties for non-compliance with heat limits.
- Monitoring: Systematic data collection to combat the current widespread underreporting of heat fatalities.

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