



Coronavirus: European Commission calls for action in protecting seasonal workers

Brussels, 16 July 2020

Today, the European Commission presents Guidelines to ensure the protection of seasonal workers in the EU in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. It provides guidance to national authorities, labour inspectorates, and social partners to guarantee the rights, health and safety of seasonal workers, and to ensure that seasonal workers are aware of their rights.

Cross-border seasonal workers enjoy a broad set of rights, but given the temporary nature of their work, they can be more vulnerable to precarious working and living conditions. The coronavirus pandemic has given more visibility to these conditions, and in some cases exacerbated them. In some cases such problems can increase the risk of COVID-19 clusters.

Nicolas **Schmit**, the Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, said: *"Each year, hundreds of thousands of seasonal workers help to underpin hugely important sectors of the EU's economy, such as food and agriculture. The coronavirus pandemic has shone a light on the challenging living and working conditions they face. This has to be addressed. Our guidelines are a wake-up call to Member States and companies to ensure they are fulfilling their duties to protect indispensable, yet vulnerable, workers."*

While the Commission monitors the proper application of Union rules in relation to seasonal workers, the responsibility for their proper application belongs to national authorities. Thus, appropriate actions are needed as a matter of urgency.

The guidelines cover a range of aspects, such as:

- the right of seasonal workers to work in an EU Member State regardless of whether they are EU nationals or come from countries outside the EU
- suitable living and working conditions, including physical distancing and appropriate hygiene measures
- clear communication to workers of their rights
- undeclared work
- social security aspects

National action

The Guidelines call on national authorities and social partners to make a renewed effort in fulfilling their role of ensuring the proper application and enforcement of the rules. They include concrete recommendations and suggestions on activities to be undertaken at national or EU level, such as:

- Calling on Member States to take all necessary measures to ensure decent working and living conditions for seasonal workers
- Calling on Member States to raise awareness on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) requirements affecting seasonal workers, helping employers implement the relevant legal requirements and providing clear information to workers in a language they understand
- Inviting Member States to provide practical guidance to smaller companies
- Asking Member States to strengthen field inspections to ensure to the proper application of the OSH rules for seasonal workers

The Commission will continue to work with Member States, social partners, the [European Agency for Safety and Health at Work \(EU-OSHA\)](#) and the [European Labour Authority \(ELA\)](#) on this important issue.

EU action

The Commission has planned a number of actions to boost the protection of seasonal workers' rights,

including:

- A study collecting data on intra-EU seasonal work and identifying the main challenges, including in relation to sub-contracting;
- A survey on high-risk occupations, including seasonal workers, carried out by the EU-OSHA in close collaboration with the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee;
- An awareness-raising campaign targeting sectors more exposed to seasonal work, coordinated by ELA;
- A hearing with European social partners on seasonal workers;
- A comparative analysis study in different Member States by the network of legal experts on free movement and the coordination of social security ([MoveS](#));
- Support to Member States through the [European Platform tackling undeclared work](#) and the [#EU4FairWork4 campaign](#), to foster better awareness of rights and obligations among workers and employers.

Background

The Guidelines presented today recall the rights of seasonal workers regardless of their status: whether they are EU citizens or third-country nationals, including those working regularly abroad on their own accord, or are posted for example through temporary work and recruitment agencies.

It is essential that seasonal workers and their employers have all the information they need both about the protection they enjoy as well as the obligations they need to fulfil.

More than 17.6 million EU citizens live or work in a Member States other than that of their nationality. Certain sectors of the European economy, in particular the agri-food and tourism sectors, depend on the support of seasonal workers from EU and non-EU countries for specific periods of the year. The Commission estimates that the average of active seasonal workers in the EU per year is between several hundred thousand and a million.

While the Commission monitors the proper application of Union and national law rules in relation to seasonal workers in the EU, the responsibility for the proper application of these rules belongs to national authorities. In order to protect seasonal workers, Member States are invited to step up the enforcement of existing EU and national law and strengthen the field inspections in this respect, including with the support of the European Labour Authority (ELA).

These guidelines complement the [Guidelines concerning the exercise of the free movement of workers during COVID-19 outbreak](#), published on 30 March 2020, and respond to a call of the European Parliament in its resolution of 19 June 2020 on the protection of cross-border and seasonal workers.

For More Information

[Guidelines on seasonal workers in the EU in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak](#) (16 July 2020)

[Guidelines concerning the exercise of the free movement of workers during COVID-19 outbreak](#) (30 March 2020)

IP/20/1342

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