



Brussels, 17 April 2020

Dear Commissioner Nicolas Schmit,

Following our [Joint Statement of March 24th on the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on social services and needed support measures](#), we are writing to you to **call to action to tackle the lack of protective equipment for some of the most exposed workers; the 11 million social services workers all across Europe.**

As you are probably well aware, we now have evidence in several countries that a large part of the virus-infected people and a big proportion of deaths appear in residential care homes, especially nursing homes for the elderly, but also in other kinds of social service facilities. Even if we still do not have any data about older persons supported by homecare services, we can assume that the situation is also tragic.

This being said, our concern extends to all support and care services. Their workers, in close contact with older persons, persons with disabilities, and other people with care and support needs, are consequently on a daily basis highly exposed to Covid-19 and can also transmit the virus to the most vulnerable persons.

Despite this situation, according to our members across Europe, social care workers have very restricted access to personal protective equipment (PPE), because they are often not considered a priority by authorities.

For this reason, it is urgent to take action now.

Specifically, we ask the European Commission:

- To develop the awareness in all Member States that social care and support is also key to face the outbreak and has to be prioritized in relevant measures to protect staff and beneficiaries;
- To ensure that an adequate share of PPE that is procured through the joint EU initiative is reserved for social care workers and that new rounds of joint procurement take their needs into account;

- To urge all Member States, as it has been decided in some countries, to initiate tests in residential settings for residents and staff at least when a case has been identified, in order to protect the residents and the staff of contamination.

We also ask the Commission to work with Member States so that they:

- Make existing PPE such as masks, hydro-alcoholic solution, protective spectacles and gloves widely available to workers in social services;
- Guarantee access for workers to reliable information and training in safety measures at the workplace in all the languages that are widespread in the workforce;
- Promote the existence of safety protocols in all residential facilities to react quickly and protect residents/beneficiaries and staff in the case of an outbreak.

As the representatives of employers and workers in the social services sector we expect that you take these demands into account and would be glad to discuss these points online with you.

Best regards,



Jan-Willem Goudriaan
General Secretary EPSU



Gregor Tomschizek
President Social Employers