

MEPs want new law to protect workers' mental and physical health

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- More than 840,000 people die each year from health conditions linked to psychosocial risks, according to the International Labour Organisation
 - Work-related psychosocial risks can give rise to occupational diseases
 - Violence, harassment, bullying and discriminatory behaviour at work must be addressed
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The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Commission to draft a law to protect workers from work-related psychosocial risks and stress at work.

On Wednesday, MEPs have agreed on a series of recommendations for a new EU bill to ensure minimum requirements to prevent, eliminate or reduce work-related psychosocial risks which could lead to work-related stress, burnout, and mental and physical disorders. This proposal should be preceded by an impact assessment including an assessment of existing legislation.

MEPs are demanding binding obligations for employers to protect mental and physical health and to ensure safe and dignified working conditions. They also want the Commission and EU-countries to explicitly recognise that work-related psychosocial risks give rise to occupational diseases.

The request for a [legislative initiative](#) was adopted by 41 votes in favour and 12 votes against, with 4 abstentions.

Policies addressing violence and harassment

MEPs want employers to adopt and implement policies defining and prohibiting violence, harassment, bullying and discriminatory behaviour undermining workers' dignity, physical or mental health, as well as early detection mechanisms and risk-based prevention protocols for third-party violence. They also say timely support is needed for workers exposed to psychosocial risks.

Psychosocial risk assessment and action plan

MEPs recommend employers carry out regular psychosocial risk assessments to evaluate factors such as excessive workload and high work intensity and adopt action plans with concrete measures. Significant restructuring or reorganisation, such as teleworking arrangements or the introduction of automated decision-making and automated monitoring systems, should be subject to a prior psychosocial risk assessment in cooperation with workers and their representatives, they say.

Employers should also ensure that the introduction of algorithmic systems does not impose excessive burden or monitoring of workers, and that human oversight is always ensured. MEPs also reiterate that workers have the right to disconnect from work.

Support for returning to work

Workers who have been absent from work due to work-related psychosocial risks should have the right to a supported and sustainable return to work, MEPs say. To that end, they recommend employers establish individual return-to-work plans, specifying factors such as adjustments to working time or work organisation and adaptations of a worker's tasks or workload.

Injury or damage presumed to be work-related

Employers should ensure that, where a worker establishes that they have suffered injury or damage to health due to exposure to work-related psychosocial risk factors, it is presumed that the injury or damage is work-related, unless the employer demonstrates that it is not linked to the worker's working conditions.

Quote

Rapporteur [Estelle Ceulemans](#) (S&D, BE) said: "This report represents a step forward, as it asks the European Commission for a legislative proposal to tackle burnout, depression, stress, and harassment. The prevalence of these issues is skyrocketing across Europe and are exacerbated by the increasing use of digital technologies and AI in the workplace. Addressing these structural work-related problems is not only an occupational health obligation but also an economic issue, costing €100 billion annually for work-related depression in the EU."

Next steps

Parliament is expected to vote on this [legislative initiative](#) during its October I 2026 plenary session. The Commission will then have three months to reply, by either informing Parliament on the steps it plans to take or by giving reasons for any refusal to propose a legislative initiative along the lines of Parliament's request.

Further information

[Committee on Employment and Social Affairs](#)

[Procedural file](#)

[International Labour Organisation - The psychosocial working environment: Global developments and pathways for action \(April 2026\)](#)

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