

### **Germany: New Decree on Working Time extends legal limit to 12h/day and 60h/week**

In Germany, a new decree valid between 8 April - 31 July 2020 authorizes companies to raise the daily legal working time to 12 hours and the weekly legal limit to 60 hours. Trade unions warn against this ineffective measure, which is particularly harmful for workers' health, especially during the time of a pandemic-crisis when health and safety must come first.

The law on working time has been under pressure for years. Employers have constantly asked for more flexibility, claiming that the rules which protected workers against excessive, unhealthy working time were out of date in times of digitalisation. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis has been a successful door-opener for employers' claim.

The new decree mostly affects workers in the healthcare and food production sectors. It is outrageous that workers who are already in the frontline of the fight against the pandemic are now forced to work even longer hours and to risk their health and safety even more.

It is only a matter of time until workers in all sectors will be affected by this change in legislation. The biggest threat is that such a harmful legislation might be prolonged and even become business as usual after the crisis. The president of the employers' association in the metal and electrical industries of Baden-Württemberg (Süd-West Metall), Wolf, has already declared that he expects workers in the metal and electrical industries to renounce their summer holidays in favour of working for economic recovery. The General Secretary of IG Metall Baden-Württemberg, Roman Zitzelsberger, already rejected this.

This change in the working time legislation cannot become part of the recovery strategy. Workers have already sacrificed enough on the frontline of fighting the COVID-19. They should not be the ones asked to also pay the bill for the recovery.

IndustriAll Europe, 21 April 2020