

Italy: The social partners update their protocol to combat COVID-19 in the workplace

The Italian social partners agreed on a new protocol to guide the activities at the workplace after the easing of the lockdown after the 4th of May. This protocol updates and replaces the previous one.

The protocol maintains the main measures set out by the previous protocol of 14 March, such as procedures for entering and leaving the workplace, prohibition of entry to the workplace if displaying symptoms, procedures for treating a person with symptoms of Covid-19, etc.

The new measures included are:

- **Suspension of activity at non-compliant firms:** Companies that fail to apply the protocol and ensure an adequate level of protection for employees will have their activity suspended “until safety conditions” are restored, the text specifies.
- **Fundamental role for occupational physicians:** Occupational physicians will be able to recommend Covid-19 diagnostic tests for employees, if they consider this to be useful. When resuming work, “it is appropriate for the doctor to be involved” both in the identification of vulnerable persons and in the reintegration of workers who have had the virus. In this case, these employees will have to present their negative test certificate and undergo a medical examination before resuming work, particularly to evaluate a potential risk profile.
- **Subcontractors:** The new text takes into account employees of subcontracting companies operating on client production sites (such as suppliers, handlers, cleaning and security staff). If one of these employees tests positive for the virus, the subcontractor will have to inform the client company immediately; the client and subcontractor will then have to work together with the health authorities to identify those who came into close contact with the worker in question. In addition, the client company will be required to provide the subcontractor with “full information on the contents of the company protocol”, and to ensure that the subcontractor’s workers fully comply.
- **Smart working and organisation of workplaces:** The new protocol continues to encourage remote working as a useful preventive measure during the phase where operations gradually resume. The employer must guarantee “supportive conditions” for smart workers, such as assistance in the use of work tools and modulation of working hours and breaks.
- **A gradual resumption.** From the 4th of May, most manufacturing sectors (such as textiles, fashion, automobiles, furniture, metalwork and electronics) and tertiary activities will restart, companies may begin preparing workplaces from this week.

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