

Belgium: social partners agree on guide for exiting lockdown in non-essential sectors

In Belgium, the social partners agreed on a guide which sets the framework that will govern the restart of the activity in non-essential sectors. The guide sets out best practices for ensuring safe workplaces and contains concrete preventive measures regarding safety, health, and hygiene instructions. It was developed by unions and employers as a compromise which serves as a basis for the more specific tailor-made agreements that will result from the negotiations at the sectoral level.

The guide highlights the importance of social dialogue at all levels in ensuring the health and safety of workers. It stresses that the existing consultation bodies within companies should be involved in choosing and implementing these measures. Furthermore, the services of internally and externally available expertise should be called upon.

The guide includes the instructions which have now become standard but addressed concretely and in line with different work situations. These instructions concern: respecting the social distance of 1.50 m, giving clear instructions, providing information both to direct staff and all those working in the workplace, hand washing, disinfecting premises and tools, ventilation, individual and collective equipment, organizing entry and exit arrangements, prioritizing teleworking, avoiding group gatherings.

The Belgian unions welcome the agreement. FGTB highlights that the guide should be considered as the minimum standard which needs to be optimized at the sectoral level based on the concrete realities and needs of each different sector.

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