

Spain introduces paid climate leave for workers amid environmental catastrophe

Edited by industriAll

On November 28, the Ministry of Labor and Economy's proposal changing the labour regulatory floor in the face of the increasingly worrisome effects of climate change was approved. The DANA, which affected mainly the Valencian Community, accelerated the process of granting specific measures for the protection of workers, facing the threat posed by the rapidly worsening environmental challenge.

The measures adopted seek to establish a “labour shield” to face the consequences of an increasingly frequent phenomenon, emphasizing the impact that climate change has on working conditions, on the economy and, in general, on the living conditions of all citizens.

The most important points included in the approved Royal Decree-Law are:

- 1. Paid leave for climatic risks:** The regulation establishes up to four days of paid leave when weather conditions or catastrophe situations make access to the workplace impossible or pose a serious and imminent risk to workers. This is a historic measure in labour matters as it protects for the first time the right of workers to be absent from work in the event of catastrophes or weather alerts.
- 2. Mandatory protocols in collective bargaining agreements:** Collective bargaining agreements must mandatorily include specific action protocols to prevent risks associated with adverse weather events and catastrophes, reinforcing the role of collective bargaining as a key tool in labour protection.
- 3. Right to information and safety:** Workers are recognized the right to be informed about the measures planned for emergencies, and it is guaranteed that they will not face any penalty for safeguarding their safety, including the possibility of paralysing the activity if necessary.
- 4. Extensions and flexibility:** When the four-day term is insufficient, extensions are allowed, and the use of ERTes (temporary employment regulation expédients) due to

force majeure may be allowed with responsibilities shared between the companies and the administration. It should be borne in mind that this type of ERTes take effect from the time the force majeure event occurs, not from the day on which they are requested.

In any case, remote work is contemplated when feasible.

The Ministry of Labor has also committed to develop a Royal Decree within one year to comprehensively address occupational risk prevention in the face of the effects of climate change.

We agree with our Spanish trade unions in valuing these measures as a step in the right direction to guarantee the safety and rights of workers in the face of global challenges such as climate change, highlighting the importance of collective bargaining and co-responsibility in social and labour protection.

Undoubtedly, climate change must be a priority in labour policies to ensure that the measures adopted protect people and their working environments. These new measures are an excellent example of combining social justice and environmental sustainability, and we trust that they will serve as a reference for future legislative developments.