

**INFORMATION NOTE No. 3**

**FOLLOW-UP ON THE ACTION GUIDELINES IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19**

**WORLD HEALTH EMERGENCY SITUATION**

As we have already stated in previous information notes, the state of emergency was declared in our country on March 14<sup>th</sup> as a result of the health crisis caused by the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19. As the extent of the pandemic grew around the world, most countries have now implemented similar measures that have entailed important changes to our personal, family and working lives.

Foreseeing the seriousness and outreach of this emergency at a national level, the State Secretariat for Territorial Policies and Public Service issued a series of Resolutions in order to establish criteria which would enable us to protect General State Administration employees' health and which would be adapted to the specific circumstances of each sector or Ministry Department.

The Directorate General of the Foreign Service (DGSE) later issued a telegram of instructions, dated March 11<sup>th</sup>, conveying these guidelines to all Representations and Consulate Generals. This telegram recommended reducing non-essential on-site work to the bare minimum at all working centres, establishing telework possibilities and staggered shifts, as well as paid leaves, absences computed as effective working time or as inexcusable duty situations, etc. This means that the Directorate General of the Foreign Service (DGSE) **declared flexibility as the main principle**. The Sub-secretariat of the Foreign Service then restated **these criteria for our whole field of work** via a circular email to the totality of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation on March 30<sup>th</sup>.

Ever since the beginning of this operation, this trade union has consequently carried out the appropriate follow-up, supported by our territorial and specific structures and by our base affiliates, who have enabled us to assess the outreach, implementation and compliance with these provisions, and to detect and correct incidents or abnormal situations at several workplaces.

As part of these efforts and as a continuation of our statements issued on 13 March and 24 March, we would now like to forward the **Action Procedure against exposure to SARS-CoV-2, published by the Health Ministry** in collaboration with other Administrations and Organizations, as well as the **Operative Criteria No. 102/2020 issued by the Directorate of the National Labour and Social Security Inspection Body**. We would like to highlight the following aspects from these two regulatory instruments:

- ✓ **Strengthening of hygienic measures at workplaces:**
  - We would like to remind you of the importance of **strengthening hygiene and disinfection measures** in all working areas to fight against any possible scenario of exposure.
  - All staff must have **access to specific and updated information regarding organizational, technical and hygienic measures** implemented at each workplace.
  - Given that the general public is still receiving on-site attention at many workplaces (mainly for consular emergency services), it is very important that you consider all hygiene and sanitizing measures at your workplace, as well as the use of adequate **personal protective equipment**, which must be provided to all staff at every workplace.
  - In the same way, public attention premises must be adapted to this new situation, which implies establishing **controlled access**, a reduced capacity that respects distancing limits, and, wherever possible, the use of glass screens or catenaries.
- ✓ **Work organisation:**
  - **Telework**, where possible.
  - Revising and updating continuity plans for working activity during emergencies.
  - Establishing **flexible hours and staggered shifts** in order to minimise staff agglomerations.



- Promoting **videoconference meetings**.
- ✓ **Especialy sensitive workers:**
  - One of the aspects that should be more closely followed is the situation of especially sensitive workers. Based on the scientific evidence available on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020, the Health Ministry has defined the following groups of people as especially vulnerable to COVID-19: individuals suffering from medical conditions such as **diabetes, cardiovascular diseases (including those with hypertension), chronic liver diseases, chronic lung diseases, chronic kidney diseases, immunodeficiency, cancer in active treatment phase; or women who are pregnant; or individuals above the age of 60.**
  - Workers who can be classified under any of these conditions must be especially attended by managers, who must immediately **take extreme preventive isolation precautions for these workers.**

During this unparalleled situation, **Collective Representation** structures are more essential than ever, particularly in scenarios which require the intervention and training of teams **in charge of occupational risk prevention** (as is the case within the Spanish Public Administration in Spain).

In this regard, it is important to remember that staff working abroad do not have these structures, as a consequence of the application of Royal Decree 20/2012, through which the Partido Popular revoked the Agreement reached on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011, regarding the Procedure for the election of representation bodies for General State Administration employees (locally-hired) abroad. The fore-mentioned Royal Decree enabled the modification of workers' electoral units abroad, thus creating a "single constituency for the entire Spanish foreign service", which replaced the "one constituency per country" that had been previously agreed. This is an organizational model which we believe does not represent a group of employees as heterogeneous, diverse and geographical dispersed like this one. In addition, as a final provision, the Royal Decree postponed the first trade union elections of these workers for two years. Eight years later, and as a result of constant obstructions carried out by the Administration, elections have still not been held.

These circumstances, as well as constituting a clear violation of the fundamental right to trade union freedom and to collective bargaining, have caused a **loophole regarding the protection of our workers' right to health** which has become all the more obvious due to the global health emergency which we are currently facing.

Of course, as soon as we return to normal conditions and as soon as negotiations within the Technical Commission for Foreign Service Workers restart, CCOO will again bring this violation of rights forward, the impairment it causes to our workers and how it has become particularly obvious at this moment. CCOO will demand solutions from the Spanish Administration.

Finally, in order to provide the greatest possible coverage and protection under the current circumstances, we would like to, once again, highlight the need to keep coordinating and communicating with our territorial structures in each country and with our elected delegates in those offices which have been constituted as union centres. Please do not hesitate to directly contact our Madrid based team (the Foreign Service Union Section of CCOO / FSC-CCOO) with **any doubt or incident regarding the current global health emergency or any other topic you may wish to discuss.** To this effect, we would like to remind you once more our contact channels:

- **Email:** [cco-servicioexterior@fsc.ccoo.es](mailto:cco-servicioexterior@fsc.ccoo.es) / [osmany.llanes@fsc.ccoo.es](mailto:osmany.llanes@fsc.ccoo.es)
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Madrid, April 8<sup>th</sup> 2020

**We will keep you informed!**

