



Statement by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu on a proposal for a European Day in Remembrance of Victims of Accidents at Work ahead of the 70 year commemoration of the Marcinelle tragedy

Brussels, 7 August 2026

Seventy years ago, on 8 August 1956, 262 workers of 12 nationalities, many of which from Italy, died in a fire at the Bois du Cazier coal mine in Marcinelle, Belgium. Most had come to Belgium in search of work and a better future. They never returned home.

Everyone who goes to work should return home safely. That is the most fundamental commitment we owe to workers. It has not changed since the Marcinelle accident, and neither has our responsibility to uphold it.

That is why, following calls from the European Parliament and several Member States, we have proposed to establish an annual **European Day in Remembrance of the Victims of Accidents at Work**. It will be observed annually on 8 August.

This will not be a day devoted only to commemorating those that lost their lives in the Marcinelle disaster and other tragic occupational accidents. It will be a yearly opportunity to renew Europe's commitment to prevention and reaffirm our ambition to eliminate work-related accidents and deaths, in every sector and in every Member State.

Despite progress made to reduce fatalities at work, every year in the European Union, more than 3,000 workers lose their lives in accidents at work, and over 170,000 are estimated to die from work-related illness. Safe and healthy working conditions are a primary concern. They are enshrined in the Treaty of the EU as well as in the European Pillar of Social Rights, and are central to what a fair, competitive and social Europe must deliver.

The [EU strategic framework](#) identifies key challenges and strategic objectives for health and safety at work and presents actions and instruments to address these in the coming years. It focuses on **anticipating and managing change in the new world of work** ensuring safe and healthy workplaces during the digital, green and demographic transitions. The strategic framework also promotes a 'vision zero' approach to eliminate work-related deaths in the EU and prioritizes the update of EU rules on hazardous chemicals to combat cancer, reproductive, and respiratory diseases. Furthermore, attention is given to strengthening preparedness for possible future health threats

I hope Member States, social partners and citizens will join us in shaping this day into what it should be: a lasting act of remembrance, and a renewed promise to every worker in Europe.

STATEMENT/26/1725

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