COVID-19: Recommendations for the workplace
Date: 13.03.2020

Introduction
The new coronavirus can pose a risk to people over the age of 65 and to people with pre-existing medical conditions. Their protection is the main aim of recommendations for the workplace. However, these recommendations apply to all employers and employees.

These recommendations will help employers decide which measures to take to protect all their employees, not just those at special risk. With cooperation all round, the measures can be implemented effectively. It remains the position that employees must not be asked systematically about their state of health.

Who is particularly at risk and must be given special protection?
- Persons over the age of 65
- Persons with any of these pre-existing conditions:
  - Cancer
  - Cardiovascular diseases
  - Chronic respiratory diseases
  - Diabetes
  - Diseases or treatments that weaken the immune system
  - High blood pressure

Protection for everyone
- Follow the recommendations at www.foph-coronavirus.ch.
- Everyone should be able to take personal hygiene measures, such as washing their hands regularly. Facilities should be provided in the workplace to do this.
- If it is possible when working, employees should be able to keep their distance from each other, e.g. by working in a different room or part of the room, by working from home, by office-splitting (some employees work in the office, others in a different place, e.g. at home), etc.
- Wherever possible, home work should be permitted and provided.

Those in good health should not wear facemasks. They do not provide effective protection against infection from respiratory viruses. This recommendation does not apply to employees who must wear a mask for certain activities, e.g. healthcare.

Protective measures for people at special risk
Employees at special risk, who are more likely to be infected when at work, should be able to keep their distance from their colleagues when at work. If this is not possible, and if they cannot be given other tasks to do that would make it possible, employers should consider allowing these employees to stay off work for the time being.

Other recommendations for employers
- Employers should be accommodating with regard to medical certificates, and not require a certificate until an employee has been absent for at least 5 days. This will relieve the pressure on doctors and the health system.
- Employers must inform their employees about personal and workplace-related protective measures. They must adapt these measures to comply with the latest recommendations from the FOPH.
As of now until further notice, employers should advise their employees not to use public transport at peak times if at all possible.

Employers should allow their employees to work as flexibly as possible so that they can avoid travelling at peak times.

Employers should activate their Business Continuity Management (BCM) systems now. For further information, please consult the ‘Handbuch für die betriebliche Vorbereitung (Pandemieplan)’ and SECO’s FAQ on the subject (not available in English).

1 https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/de/home/das-bag/publikationen/broschueren/publikationen-uebertragbare-krankheiten/pandemiebroschuere.html

2 https://www.seco.admin.ch/seco/de/home/Arbeit/Arbeitsbedingungen/gesundheitsschutz-am-arbeitsplatz/Pandemie.html