

# Press release – Protecting workers from biological agents: how to classify SARS-CoV-2



Several political groups in the Employment and Social Affairs Committee (EMPL) oppose the European Commission's decision to classify SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, as a level-3 hazard, the second most dangerous category of biological agents, arguing that it provides insufficient protection to workers. They tabled an objection to the Commission's decision insisting that SARS-CoV-2 should be classified in the highest risk group 4.

EMPL will vote on the objection on Thursday.

During an [exchange of views on 20 May](#) with the European Commission on the proposal to update the Biological Agents Directive to include SARS-CoV-2, EMPL MEPs stressed that all workers should be protected from SARS-CoV-2 and that classification in a particular risk group should be based on scientific criteria, not on practical considerations.

The European Commission gave its [green light](#), on Wednesday 3 June, to classify SARS-CoV-2 as a category 3 biological agent. Parliament has the right to veto this measure, within one month after the Commission has adopted it.

Classification in **risk group 3** means that the biological agent "can cause severe human disease and present a serious hazard to workers; it may present a risk of spreading to the community, but there is usually effective prophylaxis or treatment available". The SARS and MERS viruses are examples of risk group 3 viruses.

A **risk group 4** biological agent causes severe human disease and is a serious

hazard to workers; it may present a high risk of spreading to the community; there is usually no effective prophylaxis or treatment available. Ebola is in risk group 4.

**When:** Thursday 12.00 – 13.00

**Where:** Antall (4Q2)

**Procedure:** Regulatory procedure with scrutiny (RPS) – urgency procedure – [Rule 112\(4\)](#)

You can watch the meeting via [EP Live](#).

### **Next steps**

If the Employment and Social Affairs Committee adopts the objection in its vote on 11 June, the full House will vote during the plenary session taking place on 17-19 June. If EMPL rejects the objection, political groups can table their resolution for plenary.

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