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Joint Statement of the UNI Europa ICTS and the Telecom Industry Representatives

Attacks against telecom employees must stop now

Brussels, 19 May 2020 – The European trade union federation representing telecom workers, UNI Europa ICTS, and the Associations representing the telecoms industry, ETNO and the GSMA, have joined forces to call for swift Institutional action to stop attacks against telecom employees and to promote correct information on mobile technology while also taking steps to minimise the spread of misinformation that encourages attacks against either the workers or the infrastructure.

A concerning rise in attacks across EU countries

In the past months we have witnessed an escalation of misinformation related to 5G and mobile technology across social media platforms, including an increase in false claims that telecom antennas are dangerous for health and that 5G is linked to the spread of coronavirus. This happens despite clear guidance by the [WHO](#) and the [European Commission](#) stating the contrary. As of today, there is consensus on the fact that mobile technology, including 5G, can be operated safely. Also, there is no evidence linking 5G and COVID-19, nor there is scientific evidence that mobile phone technology has caused harm to the health of the general public.

The spread of false information is leading to the publication of several videos in which telecom workers are verbally harassed and insulted while performing their duties – such as repairing existing networks or installing essential network equipment. What is more, in some cases (UK, NL), the situations currently being investigated involve also physical attacks or verbal attacks against telecom workers.

This adds to an overall concerning situation on arson attacks against critical telecoms infrastructure. GSMA-ETNO monitoring revealed that up to 120 attacks against mobile networks are currently being investigated across 10 European countries (UK, NL, FR, DE, IR, BE, IT, SE, FI, CY).

These attacks not only put the workers in danger, but members of the public also risk serious injury, including the attackers themselves.

Importance of mobile networks and 5G for society

In addition to the main area of concern – violence against workers – we also underline that mobile technology and 5G are a vital engine of socio-economic growth. The European Union is working to fight a deep economic recession and on building a recovery plan. Digitalisation and the development of 5G networks will be at the core of such EU plan, including the necessary investment into networks. What is more, the enablement of remote working and of remote healthcare are both dependent on the integrity of the current networks as well as the development of the new ones.

Call for action

UNI Europa ICTS, ETNO and the GSMA believe that every worker has the absolute right to a safe working environment. We therefore ask the EU institutions, National Governments and enforcement authorities to take swift action in protecting the safety of telecom workers across Europe and in



fighting against all false claims on mobile technology. In this context, it is particularly important to underline how scientific evidence clearly indicates that mobile technology can be operated safely. EU Member States should step up their work on informing European citizens and should continue to support independent research.

The ongoing escalation in misinformation and attacks against workers is absolutely unacceptable. In the long term, it also threatens Europe's ability to leverage the 5G technology in supporting current and future jobs.

More information:

UNI Europa - <https://www.uni-europa.org/>

ETNO - <https://etno.eu/>

GSMA - <https://www.gsma.com/gsmaeurope/>