

Modena Declaration 2025

A Call to Strengthen Worker Health Through ILO Conventions C155, C161, C187 and the New Convention C192 on Biological Hazards

We, representatives of the Occupational Medicine Section of the Union of European Medical Specialists (UEMS), gathered in Modena in 2025, affirm our shared commitment to strengthening occupational health in Europe and globally.

1. OSH is a Fundamental Right

With the 2022 decision of the International Labour Organization (ILO), a safe and healthy working environment is now recognised as a Fundamental Principle and Right at Work.

This obliges all ILO Member States — including all European countries — to respect, promote and realise occupational safety and health (OSH), even without ratifying the relevant conventions.

For Occupational Medicine, this has direct implications for clinical practice, prevention strategies, policy influence and ethical responsibility.

2. Why ILO Conventions Matter — Across Europe

Across Europe, many national OSH frameworks are shaped by EU legislation and related European regulatory instruments. In parallel, ILO conventions provide the global normative foundation upon which these systems are built.

ILO conventions remain essential because they are:

- rights-based and global in scope
- tripartite, giving workers, employers and governments an equal voice
- foundational, forming the international standards that inform regional and national regulation
- stable across political cycles, ensuring continuity beyond changing policy priorities

In short:

Regional and national legislation defines regulatory mechanisms;
ILO conventions articulate the fundamental principles and obligations underpinning them.

Ratification strengthens national accountability and provides Occupational Medicine with a stronger normative platform grounded in international labour standards.

3. Four Key ILO Conventions for Modern Occupational Health

We highlight four conventions essential for a modern, prevention-based OSH system:

- **C155** — Occupational Safety and Health (national policy, risk prevention)
- **C161** — Occupational Health Services (multidisciplinary, accessible OH services)
- **C187** — Promotional Framework (national OSH strategies, systems, data)
- **C192** — Prevention and Protection Against Biological Hazards (2025)

Together, these instruments provide the architecture of a resilient OSH system capable of addressing challenges from climate change, pandemics, new technologies and evolving work patterns.

Since C155 and C187 are now Fundamental Conventions, all ILO Member States are required to report on progress, regardless of ratification status.

4. Remaining Ratification and Implementation Gaps in Europe

Across Europe, ratification and implementation levels vary. Several European countries have not yet ratified C155, C161 or C187, and no country has yet ratified C192. Even where ratification exists, practical implementation gaps may remain. Strengthening alignment between national systems and international standards remains an ongoing priority.

5. Our Call to Governments and Institutions

We jointly call on European governments, labour administrations, social partners and the medical community to:

1. Accelerate ratification and effective implementation of C155 and C187
2. Strengthen and expand Occupational Health Services in line with C161
3. Prepare for early ratification and implementation of C192
4. Ensure national OSH systems reflect OSH as a Fundamental Right
5. Reinforce social dialogue, tripartite cooperation and adequate resourcing

6. The Role of Occupational Medicine

Occupational physicians and multidisciplinary OH teams play a pivotal role in operationalising these conventions through:

- prevention and early detection of occupational diseases
- management of biological, chemical, ergonomic and psychosocial risks
- protection of vulnerable workers
- contribution to national OSH strategies, surveillance and policy
- strengthening workplace resilience in the face of climate-related and biological hazards

Our professional mandate is reinforced when anchored in international labour standards and supported by coherent national and regional frameworks

7. Conclusion

With OSH now recognised as a fundamental human and labour right, and with the adoption of Convention 192 on Biological Hazards, Europe has a renewed opportunity to demonstrate global leadership.

We stand ready, as Occupational Medicine specialists, to support governments and institutions in building safer, healthier and more resilient workplaces — grounded in international standards and strengthened through European cooperation.

Adopted in Modena, Italy – 2025
UEMS Occupational Medicine Section