



A NIGHTWORKSHOP INITIATIVE

# NIGHTWORKER CHARTER

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE INVISIBLE WORKERS  
IN NIGHTSHIFT CITIES

ACROSS THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED KINGDOM



The world of work is in urgent need of transformation.  
Yet, you can't transform anything until you find out  
what needs to be repaired and renewed.

No deep transformation happens without reparation.

Press Release

March 1, 2022

# Everyone Counts: The Invisible Workers in Nightshift Cities

Julius-Cezar MacQuarie

The world of nightwork is in urgent need of transformation. Yet, you can't transform anything until you find out what needs to be repaired and renewed.

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March 1, 2022

Today, the United Nations (UN) celebrates Zero Discrimination Day – the global observance of the unwritten law that everyone counts in our societies, regardless of their skin colour, gender, skill level, education, and beliefs.

The Nightworker Charter stresses the need to recognise the contribution of nightworkers in our societies, thus putting nighttime workers on equal footing with their daytime counterparts. Hence, this press release is happening on March 1st to celebrate the strategic role that nightworkers have played in keeping societies going around-the-clock. Besides, unlike any bank holiday, March 1st is a global observance day by the UN, celebrated through work, not rest. More importantly, the UN Zero Discrimination Day is symbolised through wearing a butterfly, as a sign of change, hope, renewal – that is, transformation. Thus, we seek to transform night workplaces by upholding the basic rights of nightworkers to live and work in dignity.

Think of Nightwork.

It has been part of many industries and services, such as transport, communication, fire brigades, police, the army, and hospitals. Working in the evenings or at night is not a new phenomenon, yet it is an essential form of work to the functioning of our around-the-clock societies. Nevertheless, the current labour system in developed societies has been designed for daytime work. That explains why nightwork is erroneously thought to be a supplement to daytime labour and why the problems with nightwork are rarely fixed. Recognising that nightwork is its own form of work with specific dynamics and problems, especially in post-industrial countries, is long overdue.

Think of Nightworkers.

There are millions of people – including migrants, women, and People of Colour – who work ‘graveyard’ shifts and because of it, experience tremendous health impacts, isolation, and exclusion from mainstream society.

Nightworkers are the ‘other’ workers to the ‘9-5ers’ (Bianchini, 1995). Blue Mondays in 9-to-5 day jobs are a grind but waking up in the evenings or in the middle of the night to go to work is simply dreadful. Eating fast food due to lack of nighttime eating options is unhealthy, and working all night disrupts the circadian and biological rhythms that let us to know to sleep when it’s dark and stay awake in daylight. Not being able to socialise with friends during the daytime and evenings marginalises nightworkers even further.

Moreover, nightworkers frequently live on the margins of mainstream society, which makes them unavailable to attend family events and absent from the minds of those in government who tackle problems in other forms of work. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how across the European Union (EU) and in the United Kingdom (UK), despite their strategic roles in the functioning of national economies, nightworkers have been excluded from political agendas and public debates about who is (or not) an ‘essential’ or ‘key’ worker. Nightworkers deserve a better social contract – better food, sleep, remuneration, transport, and rest places when they toil at night.

These ‘other 9-5’ workers should represent more to developed societies than bio-automatons. Their bodies are left spent and exhausted by the merciless 24/7 demand for manual labour that keeps the world going around the clock, even in times of crisis. There is a pressing demand for a new set of arrangements that address the problems specific to nightwork. That is why you should take interest and assist this open, democratic process to improve the lives of nightworkers. Let’s repair together a broken labour system that causes suffering for millions of nightworkers and their families and friends.

This Nightworker Charter’s role offers fresh and concrete ways (how) to recognise, (what) to address, and (who could and should) repair the problems with nightwork. Join many others and become one of the signatories by supporting the Nightworker Charter.

## **What is the Nightworker Charter?**

The Nightworker Charter seeks to improve the working conditions of nightworkers. The Nightworker Charter gives nightworkers the voice and tools to gain recognition for their many contributions to national economies.

## **What does the Nightworker Charter do?**

The Nightworker Charter offers practical solutions to improve nightworkers' working conditions on the basis that all relevant stakeholders:

- (1) Recognise the problems specific to nightwork
- (2) Address the multi-layered precarity associated with nightwork
- (3) Make nightwork a stand-alone form of work in legal terms

## **Why is the Nightworker Charter relevant now?**

Nightworkers play a crucial role in supporting nighttime economies (NTE), day workers, and national economies throughout Europe. Yet today we all face a health crisis. This Nightworker Charter represents solidarity with nightshift workers, be they the frontline or even the 'non-essential' workers who have helped us get through this awful period. The Nightworker Charter begins a reparation process that defends nightworkers' rights embedded within current constitutional arrangements but are hardly ever implemented.

## **How did the Nightworker Charter come about?**

For the past decade, I have reached out to the many people who inhabit the night. I do this in my various capacities: as a night ethnographer, migration scholar, outreach worker, and collaborator with NGOs that work with vulnerable groups. I do this because I care about the vulnerable migrants and locals doing hidden, yet essential labour – and that's why I think you should help.

The ideas behind this Nightworker Charter have developed through my conversations with individuals and organisations who also care about those working the invisible nightshift. The Nightworker Charter remains open to collaboration with individuals and organisations pledging to improve conditions for those who work nights.

## **How can you get involved?**

Individuals and organisations are invited to sign this charter and invite others to do the same. Recommend the charter

to unions, labour organisations, employers, local and regional councillors, and health and safety organisations.

In solidarity with nightshift workers,

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**Invitations to publish an op-ed on March 1, 2022 are now open:**

Media and other platforms:

For anything related to the Nightworker Charter or if you're willing to publish an op-ed on the local, regional or national media, please email [thenightworkshop@gmail.com](mailto:thenightworkshop@gmail.com).

We're looking for journalists willing to cover this subject via an online interview or in person. You can reach us at [imailfromdrjc@gmail.com](mailto:imailfromdrjc@gmail.com) or +44 7412 802 447.

**Confirmed platforms that will publish an op-ed (17.02.2022):**

**USA**

Society for the Anthropology of Work, [Exertions](#)

**EU**

[LeftEast](#), [New Europe College Bucharest](#), Institute of Advanced Studies

**To be confirmed in due course**

Democracy Institute, Central European University, Derivé, Migrant Voice UK

**Special mention:** Thank you to Samuel Weeks and Josh Fisher, co-editors of the Society for Anthropology of Work's Exertions publication for their editorial work and for agreeing to publish this press release. Thanks also go to Ana-Maria Sîrghi, New Europe College for her support with the communication of this press release and The Charter. I am indebted to Magdalena Craciun for her piercing insight and attention to detail when looking over the drafts.

