

Protection of workers from exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work: exposure limit values

2016/0130(COD) - 09/03/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted the report by Marita ULVSKOG (S&D, SE) on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2004/37/EC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work.

The inclusions of reprotoxic substances: Members proposed broadening the scope of the Directive to allow for the inclusion of reprotoxic substances. They stressed that reprotoxic substances were of great concern and that the organisation of workplace prevention should be applied as for carcinogens and mutagens.

The amended text clarifies that the requirements laid down in the Directive should be considered as minimum requirements, with Member States having the possibility of setting more stringent binding occupational exposure limits.

It is essential to take the precautionary principle into account, especially where there are uncertainties as to the impact of dealing with substances and their mixtures on workers health or where available scientific and technical data is not sufficient.

Limit values: the report introduced stricter limit values ??for several substances:

- wood dust: Members do not wish to distinguish between hardwood dust and softwood dust. They consider that the limit value of 2 mg/m³ should constitute the EU's common limit value (the Commission proposed a limit value of 3 mg/m³ for hardwood dust);
- chromium VI: a limit value of 0.001 mg/m³ is proposed (instead of 0.025 mg/m³);
- respirable crystalline silica dust: a limit value of 0.05 mg/m³ is proposed (instead of 0.1 mg/m³).

The Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work (ACSH) should also submit up-to-date opinions on the binding occupational exposure limits on respirable crystalline silica, hardwood dusts, acrylamide, 1,3-butadiene, chromium VI and refractory ceramic fibres.

Health surveillance measures: Members considered that health surveillance should be provided for all workers exposed (i) prior to exposure; (ii) at regular intervals during the exposure period; (iii) after the end of the exposure and the end of their employment.

Data collection: Members called on the Commission to:

- support best practices with regard to data collection between Member States and propose how data collection can be improved. The Member States should provide the Commission with information for the purposes of its reports on the implementation of Directive 2004/37/EC;
- develop a harmonised methodology for measuring workers' exposure to carcinogens, mutagens and reprotoxic substances at Union level.