



27 April 2021

European Parliament approves legislation to stop cancer at work

Stop Cancer at Work Campaign calls on European Commission and European Council to include hazardous drugs and reprotoxins in legislation now

The European Parliament has confirmed the need for immediate legislative action – not just guidance – to stop workers from contracting cancer at work, by including hazardous drugs and reprotoxins in the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive (CMD). The trilogue process with the European Council, Parliament and Commission will now start to finalise the legislation.

The Stop Cancer at Work Campaign believes that the European Commission and European Council should now, without further delay, include hazardous drugs and reprotoxins in the CMD. Legislation is the only way to deliver the necessary certainty, legal clarity and compliance with the CMD to prevent workers contracting cancer. The Commission has already undertaken the necessary consultation, impact assessment and scientific justification so that the EU can proceed immediately to legislate.

Legislation to protect workers is now not only supported by the European Parliament but also - according to an independent report on hazardous drugs published in March by the Commission - by the majority of the Member States that make up the European Council along with employers, trades unions, healthcare professionals, and patients.

Inclusion of hazardous drugs in Annex I and reprotoxins in the title of the CMD will prevent the occupational exposure of workers and patients in healthcare to carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic drugs, which cause workplace cancer and reproductive problems and result in unnecessary deaths and harm to those exposed.

ENDS

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Study supporting the assessment of different options concerning the protection of workers from exposure to hazardous medicinal products, including cytotoxic medicinal products – March 2021

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=148&langId=en>

The Stop Cancer at Work Campaign:

The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME),
European Association of Pharmacy Technicians (EAPT)
European Biosafety Network (EBN)
European Cancer Patient Coalition (ECPC)
European Federation of Nursing Associations (EFN)
European Public Service Union (EPSU)
European Specialist Nurses Organisation (ESNO),
The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
The European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)

As a coalition of essential workers, professionals and cancer patients, the Campaign is demanding action from policymakers and political leaders to stop further preventable deaths. The European Commission's own research shows that at least 40% of cancer cases are avoidable - but we have yet to see meaningful change and very little on preventing workplace cancer in Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

The scale of the problem is vast: it is estimated that 100,000 new deaths each year of work related cancer from occupational exposure to hazardous substances, the biggest killer in the EU. The European Commission's own research shows that at least 40% of cancer cases are avoidable. The protective equipment, safer technology and proper practices are available and not costly but employers are unlikely to universally introduce them unless they are required to do so.