16 December 2021

Stop Cancer at Work Campaign welcomes progress made in protecting workers from cancer and reproductive problems at work

(Press release – 16 December 2021) The Stop Cancer at Work Campaign today welcomes the provisional political agreement by the European Parliament and European Council to include for the first time greater protection and reference to reprotoxic substances and hazardous medicinal products (HMPs) in the fourth revision of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive (CMD).

The agreement aims to provide workers and patients in healthcare with greater preventive measures against exposure to reprotoxic substances and hazardous medicinal products (HMPs) in the workplace.

Reprotoxins can cause impaired fertility or infertility so their inclusion within the scope of the CMD for the first time is especially beneficial to workers, both male and female. This means that the Directive will be now known as the Carcinogens, Mutagens and Reprotoxic substances Directive (CMRD).

12 reprotoxins with a binding occupational exposure limit will be introduced in Annex III to the Directive and included in the scope for the first time.

With regards to HMPs, training for workers handling hazardous medical drugs is added in the legal text as well as the commitment to adopt EU guidelines by the end of 2022 with the relevant stakeholders and co-operation of the Social Partners (EPSU and HOSPEEM).

Moreover, the agreement states that where appropriate and no later than one year after the transposition of this Directive, the Commission shall, taking into account the latest developments in scientific knowledge, and after appropriate consultation of relevant stakeholders, develop a definition and establish an indicative list of HMPs.

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.