

E F B W W NEWSLETTER

ETUC: END WORKPLACE CANCER

Early January, the ETUC expressed its support for the initiative of the Dutch Presidency to fight work related cancer. The ETUC support leaflet stated that some 100,000 workers or retired workers in the EU are dying every year from a work related cancer.

Six action points were listed:

- the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive
- better health surveillance for exposed workers
- stronger attention to Endocrine Disrupters
- the need to cover Sun Radiation under EU legislation
- plans for the safe removal and disposal of Asbestos
- stronger recognition of and support for the Social Dialogue

The ETUC also prepared a press release with precise demands for the revision of the carcinogens and mutagens Directive. The ETUC published a list of 50 workplace exposure limits and asked that this list be implemented by the end of 2016, and not by 2020 as foreseen by the European Commission. The list also includes diesel engine exhaust, leather dust, formaldehyde, refractory ceramic fibres, respiratory crystalline silica, cadmium and cadmium compounds, benzo(a)pyrene, chromium six compounds, ethylene oxide and trichloroethylene (TRI). The Dutch Presidency is now preparing a conference (23 to 25 May in Amsterdam), which will deal with the topic of workplace cancer and especially the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive. The conference will be a good opportunity to present our demands to the European and national policy makers, but also to paint a lively picture of our experiences in the construction and woodworking sectors.

ASBESTOS CAMPAIGN: LATEST NEWS

The previous edition of the EFBWW health and safety newsletter reported on our efforts to combine the EU policy for improving energy efficiency in buildings with the removal of asbestos. This was a priority in the context of the Energy Union and the consultation on the energy performance in buildings directive, because we can expect that increasing the number of deep renovations for better energy performance in older buildings will also increase the quantity of asbestos handled. The EFBWW responded to the consultation with a position that combined the two policy areas. In addition the EFBWW, together with the rapporteurs of the EESC opinion on "Freeing Europe from Asbestos", sent a letter to the European Commission to propose the establishment of a Commission "task force" to approach the asbestos issue in a holistic manner and implement a comprehensive policy approach. The overall goal should be the establishment of national action programmes for the eradication of asbestos. The Commission gave a preliminary reply to our request mid December 2015, in which it indicated that the different units were communicating about this issue and were preparing a detailed response for the first half of 2016.

Priorities for 2016 - registration and surveying of asbestos in the European building stock

Today, asbestos continues to pose a widespread but hidden threat. For national action programmes to be successful, authorities, owners, and companies need reliable information on the patterns of asbestos use so as to be able to take the appropriate precautionary measures. Therefore, one of the priorities of the EFBWW asbestos campaign in 2016 will be the surveying and registering of asbestos in buildings.

Surveying and registering existing asbestos is an important step towards devising an effective strategy for asbestos removal by providing an overview of the existing building stock and the potential of encountering asbestos.

Based on existing experiences in member states, we plan to explore the strengths and weaknesses of different models and to promote good examples to European policy makers. Our goal is not to implement uniform European standards, but to raise the issue on a political level in order to facilitate the implementation of the appropriate measures at local, regional and national level.

ABClean e-learning course - now available

In September, we concluded the ABClean project, which resulted in the creation of an asbestos awareness e-learning course. The target group for the course are workers in the construction sector who are not specialized in asbestos removal, but who may encounter the substance in the course of e.g. renovation, maintenance or demolition. While workers in specialized asbestos removal companies are usually well trained and qualified to handle asbestos this is not always the case for workers who may encounter asbestos accidentally. To address this issue the EFBWW has been partner in a Leonardo Da Vinci Project ABClean to create an e-learning course for persons responsible for asbestos awareness in companies that might encounter asbestos unexpectedly. The course is available in English, Finnish, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, and Spanish. If you are interested in this course and would like to receive additional information, please contact Stephen Schindler (sschindler@efbh.be).

Contents of this issue:

- Asbestos: latest developments
- EU OSH policies
- Project on construction machines
- News

SOME MOMENTUM FOR OSH ACTION AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

In our last Health and Safety Newsletter, we reported about the deluge of Commission papers, around the REFIT programme. Meanwhile an interinstitutional agreement between Parliament, Council and Commission has been signed. The “Better Regulation Watchdog” (see also previous Newsletter) considered this agreement as a compromise with which the Parliament succeeded in avoiding that the impact assessments became the tool of the Commission to solely decide everything outside the political negotiation processes. The newly established REFIT platform met a first time on 29 January. It remains to be seen how this structure will develop and whether it becomes a problem focused mediation body or a platform for ideological struggles.

On 27 October 2015, the Commission published its [work programme 2016 entitled “No time for business as usual”](#). The Commission will “focus on the big things where citizens expect Europe to make a difference.” In this connection, the paper is listing major challenges such as jobs, growth, investment gap, refugees, climate change, natural resources or inequality. They further refer to a number of related and already published action plans and they say all is “underpinned by the Commission’s new Better Regulation Agenda.” This is at

least a clear message which implies that all political intentions are formulated under the conditionality of being accepted by the REFIT proceedings.

Another basic credo in the document is the focus on results: “Results are what matter, not good intentions.” The message is simple: “Much of our legislation is useless, not feasible. But rules which are... too heavy or too complex to be applied in practice will not achieve their objectives.” Once again, the Commission is taking OSH as an example. This will certainly please Mr. Cameron, but we consider this as a threat. Especially since we know that many of the directives are not properly implemented because of shortcomings, not necessarily based on their complexity, but often due to a lack of political will.

On the other hand, we have also witnessed some promising developments, driven by other actors from the European political arena. The European Parliament adopted its [resolution on Workplace safety and health](#) on 26 October 2015, presenting concrete demands towards the legislator to improve the European legislative framework. The wording sometimes sounds somewhat defensive, but all the important issues are listed: Carcinogens, stress at workplace and asbestos to name just a

few. Women and OSH plays an important role in the document and the public interest in companies’ OSH policies is underlined – what happens in companies is not just a private issue but a public one. The report makes the very useful distinction between micro and small businesses and medium sized companies.

Equally pointing in the right direction are the Council Conclusions from 5 October 2015. These Conclusions underline the autonomous role of the Social Partners (hairdressers agreement) and repeat that EU OSH standards are minimum standards. The paper additionally pushes the Commission to accelerate the revision process of the Carcinogenic Directive.

The Dutch Presidency used the momentum, created by the above-mentioned positive aspects in the ongoing struggle of the future European OSH policy, to plan some activities which also target to push for a comprehensive and quick revision of the Carcinogens Directive. Hence the conference in Amsterdam (see page 1 – ETUC article), which will deal expressly with the question of work related cancer, substitution of dangerous substances and the revision of the carcinogens and mutagens directive.

NEWS/NEWS/NEWS/

FNCB-CFDT ACTION DAYS 2015

In France, the FNCB CFDT organised various activities in the framework of the EFBWW Occupational Health and Safety action days: a press release and the EFBWW posters were disseminated at company level. Many of the worker representatives presented the material at the works council meetings, especially in SOCOTEC, a major provider of services regarding health and safety protection, SATELEC (FAYAT Group), specializing in large power grids, and EIFFAGE, the third largest player in construction in France.

Pierre-Gaél Lorèal, CFDT Safety and Health secretary

« HEALTHY WORKPLACES FOR ALL AGES »

The new OSHA campaign deals with the topic of an ageing workforce. By 2030, workers aged 55–64 are expected to make up 30% or more of the total workforce. Thus, many workers are likely to face both longer working lives and longer exposure to hazards at work as well as a changing world of work. To prevent higher incidences of ill health, efforts have to be made to ensure safe and healthy working conditions throughout the whole working life. The present changes we are facing in Europe result in various challenges for employees, employers and organisations:

- Longer working lives may result in longer exposures to risks.
- A higher proportion of older workers means more people having chronic health problems and thus specific needs.
- Older workers might be more vulnerable to certain hazards.
- Disability prevention, rehabilitation and return to work are of increased importance.
- At the society level, age discrimination needs to be dealt with.

See also: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/healthy-workplaces-campaigns/2016-17-campaign-healthy-workplaces-all-ages>

ITALY: FILLEA CGIL CONFERENCE ON ASBESTOS

Sponsored by Fillea and national CGIL, the conference "Asbestos Risk - Improve and redevelop, inform citizens, train workers, support victim's families" was held in Turin on 10 December 2015, at the headquarters of the regional CGIL. Some 70 people from all over Italy gathered to exchange experiences and to debate about needed future activities aiming at the safe removal of all asbestos in Italy

Despite the ban in force throughout Europe, asbestos continues to make victims in our continent and worldwide. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) data, there are about 125 million workers exposed to asbestos worldwide. But this figure does not consider those who have previously worked with asbestos or people living near asbestos production plants. Because, even today, all over the planet more than two million tonnes of asbestos is produced.

The WHO states that each year, for the EU only, between 20 and 30 thousand cases of asbestos-related diseases are recorded and it is estimated that by 2030 more than 300,000 people will have died of mesothelioma.

Worldwide, some 112,000 people die from asbestos-related diseases each year.

Although the Italian legislation on asbestos is one of the most advanced in Europe and in the world, there are still 32 million tonnes of compact materials containing asbestos and many tons of friable asbestos in various contaminated sites in Italy. A report from 2015 mentioned over 44,000 sites scattered over the national soil. However, knowing that in the Marche region alone there are 14,000 surveyed sites and 23,000 contaminated sites in Piemonte, 5,300 of which have already been cleared, it is obvious that the data is not complete.

The sites which are to be reclaimed within the National Environment Ministry remediation program alone cover 75 thousand hectares of territory in which the presence of asbestos cement materials (including Balangero, Casale Monferrato, Broni, Bari and Biancavilla) has been ascertained.

The goal of the conference, was to give information to and create awareness among workers and citizens and to raise awareness about the dangers of asbestos

for the health and the environment.

The unaware exposure, in fact, is even more insidious, as it regards particularly the families of the workers involved in asbestos removal, who at home are handling contaminated clothes and objects, as well as users of public buildings and the inhabitants of private buildings that hide old and often shabby asbestos roofs or structures. Hence the need, which Fillea CGIL has been claiming for years, to ensure a high level of information and training of workers, to promote free training courses for all types of workers (involved in transport and recycling), to set up a specific training course leading to qualification-specialization - for employees or executives - of maintenance workers, and disposal of asbestos. Knowledge and risk perception gives workers the possibility to make a responsible choice and the ability to exercise their right to protect themselves or to refuse a particular job.

Ermira Behri, National Secretary CGIL Fillea

NEWS/NEWS/NEWS/NEWS

ISO DIS 45001

The International Standard Organisation has presented a draft voluntary Standard (ISO DIS 45001) on "Occupational health and safety management systems – requirements with guidance for use". This standard, could create an enormous impact on existing health and safety structures on company level and, could also undermine legal requirements, especially regarding the participation of workers. The ETUC is currently discussing a resolution on this document. The European Trade Union Confederation is especially concerned that this international standard inter-

fere with legal requirements laid down by the Framework Directive 89/391 and dilute the risk prevention approach. The ETUC sees the absolute need to amend the draft by including significant references to compliance with existing regulations, national laws and other legal requirements. Additionally the ETUC is objecting that the document is not adequately reflecting core principles of ILO's international labour standards in the field of OSH.

SPAIN: RISE IN ACCIDENTS

Trade Union CCOO reports that workplace accidents have been on the rise since the beginning of the crisis. More minor, major and fatal accidents took place in 2015 than 2014. Especially minor accidents, of which 218,019 took place in the first six months of

2015 and the 239 fatal accidents constituted an increase of 13,577 and 16 cases respectively. Workers and trade unionists report the rise in accidents is due to a combination of higher work stress and pressure, as well as a weaker negotiation position of workers and their representatives. Accidents often took place at the end of a long shift-, when regular safety checks of equipment had not been carried out and because workers carried out unsafe work tasks.



Next issue:

Deadline for contributions for the next issue of this newsletter is Friday, 26 May 2016.
Please send your contributions to the EFBWW office in Brussels.

COMMISSION ACCEPTS PROJECT ON CONSTRUCTION MACHINES

After having established a small ad-hoc group on construction machines in 2014, the EFBWW and FIEC initiated the project and contacted CECE (the European trade organisation for construction machines producers) who agreed to become a project partner. Also industriAll Europe supports the project, representing the workers' view on the producers' side.

The project is driven by the basic idea of achieving the best results by bringing together both producer and user.

Meanwhile, a first Steering Group meeting has taken place in which the project partners exchanged their general views and especially discussed on the possible content of the five planned workshops and the expected project outcome. Additionally, they discussed about the future dissemination of the project results, how to arrange enduring professional relationships and possible follow-up activities.

The essential philosophy of the project is as follows:

- a. Work design is to begin at the stages of innovation and development.
- b. Bringing together manufacturers and users of products can have a direct, positive influence on the properties of the products with relevance to the work itself.

- c. Direct communication is conducive to quick changes and rapid progress, which in turn can be used as a basis for the adaptation of standards.

Regarding the content of the respective workshops the steering group decided to run a broader first workshop aiming at "setting the scene". Besides experts and practitioners, it is also foreseen to invite various Directorates General from the European Commission to discuss with them the various aspects of machinery design and safety and the holistic approach of stakeholder involvement in design.

The second workshop will deal with standardization and the three remaining workshops with specific topics such as rearward visibility, ergonomics, general safety, quick-action couplings, training and work organization.

Workshops are scheduled as follows:

1 st workshop :	22 September 2016
2 nd workshop :	16 November 2016
3 rd workshop :	1 December 2016
4 th workshop :	9 February 2017
5 th workshop :	14 March 2017

DATES

28 April - Workers' Memorial Day

This year, "Workplace Stress: a collective challenge" is the theme of the campaign of the World Day for Safety and Health at Work. The activities will draw attention to current global trends in work-related stress and its impact.

1. May - International workers' day

23 - 25 May

Under the Dutch Presidency of the European Union, a conference on Chemicals and Carcinogens and related EU-law is planned.

7 June - EFBWW Open Expert Meeting

This year's annual open expert meeting will provisionally deal with:

- ◆ Chemical Substances and the Revision of the EU-Carcinogens and mutagens Directive
- ◆ Diseases of the Musculoskeletal System
- ◆ Psychosocial Risks at the Workplace

AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION MEETS EUROPEAN COLLEAGUES TO DISCUSS ASBESTOS

Following an assessment of the asbestos situation in Australia and forecasting possible developments, the Australian government decided to set up an agency for Asbestos Safety and Eradication.

The agency dispatched a delegation to Europe to learn from different initiatives and experiences at national and European level. The EFBWW was invited to join the meeting at the EESC together with representatives from the European Commission and the employers' organization FIEC for an exchange with Andrew Morgan from Australia.

The agency takes a holistic approach that takes into account various aspects related to dealing with asbestos effectively. Including public awareness, best practices in asbestos management, education,

handling, storage and disposal, identification. The sharing of information about locating asbestos is another aspect, as well as assessing capacities for safe removal, promoting research. Following experiences from New Zealand they also consider identifying priorities for removal such as areas at risk of natural disasters that could cause the uncontrolled release of fibres such as wild fires, earthquakes and floods.

Another issues identified as a concern in Australia, which is equally important in Europe, is low intensity exposure for example in asbestos infested buildings and in the environment. Unlike occupational exposure in mining and production, estimates suggest that the number of asbestos related diseases, which can be

attributed to this type of exposure will not peak for decades to come. This also affects scores of construction workers who may encounter asbestos during the course of renovation, maintenance and demolition. In order to estimate the scope of the problem, the agency also commissioned a forecasting model to estimate the amount of asbestos remaining in the building stock. In short, much can be learned from Australia's holistic approach to tackling asbestos.

Imprint: Rolf Gehring
EFBWW
Rue Royale 45
1000 Brussels
Tel.: +32(2)227.10.40
E-mail: info@efbh.be