

Stop Cancer at Work Campaign calls on European Commission to approve legislation now to protect workers and patients from getting cancer



(Press release, Brussels 30 June 2021)

The trilogue process with the European Council, Parliament and Commission under the Portuguese Presidency concludes today and there has been no discussion at all on the important legislative changes to the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive (CMD), passed by the European Parliament to protect workers from cancer and reproductive problems at work. These long-standing improvements to worker and patient safety need to happen now to prevent unnecessary deaths and harm resulting from occupational exposure to hazardous carcinogenic and reprotoxic drugs and substances.

On 23 February European Commissioner Schmit said he was persuaded of the danger of cancer treatments for healthcare workers exposed to hazardous drugs (HMPs) and would bring forward a follow up proposal to deliver greater protection. On reprotoxins he said that the Commission was already acting to include substances.

The European Parliament overwhelmingly voted on 25 March to support the Stop Cancer at Work campaign's demands for legislative action now to include (HMPs) and reprotoxins in the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive. These amendments will provide effective worker protection and preventive measures, a more coherent risk-based methodology and legal certainty for employers and EU Member States.

Every year more than **12.7 million healthcare workers** in Europe are potentially exposed to carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic hazardous drugs (also known as hazardous medicinal products or HMPs). Studies show that hospital workers who handle cytotoxic (antineoplastic) drugs, used to treat cancer, are three times more likely to develop malignancy and that nurses exposed to cytotoxic drugs are twice as likely to miscarry.

The Stop Cancer at Work Campaign believes that **the European Commission should now respond properly and promptly** to the democratically elected representatives of Europe, and healthcare employers, workers and professionals, to include HMPs and reprotoxins in the CMD. On 1 July the EU Presidency shifts to Slovenia so progress needs to be made quickly to protect workers and deliver these

much needed legislative amendments.

ENDS

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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.

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