

Women, Work and Occupational Cancer - Fighting discrimination against female workers

(6 December 2018) EPSU was represented by colleagues from the Secretariat and from our Spanish member FSS-CC.OO and actively participated in the [conference "Women, Work and Cancer"](#) organised on 4 and 5 December 2018 in Brussels. The conference (read [here](#) a detailed report) came timely and was an opportunity to examine the relations between working conditions and female cancer. It brought together trade unionists and researchers from across Europe around an issue insufficiently covered in the last years and decades. Epidemiological research in this area focuses far more often on men than on women. There is a stereotype of occupational cancer only being an issue for male professions in traditional industries. It is not least therefore that work on the prevention of occupational cancer in women is still facing some difficulties. The fight to end discrimination against female workers with cancer or post recovery also was an important topic.

Several women also gave testimonials about the work-related exposures to carcinogen substances that caused their cancer. One was a former nurse from Spain, Georgina Angusto, who was diagnosed bladder cancer. She spoke about the impact on her own health of hazardous drugs and cytotoxic products she was in intensive contact with over many years as a nurse of an urology department at the reference hospital of Barcelona. She was neither informed about nor trained how to reduce or avoid risks she was exposed to when handling, preparing and administering antineoplastic medication. Although recommendations how to deal with hazardous drugs had been issued by the responsible regional authority they were not applied in the health institution she worked at.

At the ETUI conference the CFDT (France) presented a leaflet recently produced on occupational breast cancer (in FR only: [Le cancer du sein peut être d'origine professionnelle](#)). EPSU's member FSS-CC.OO has issued, with the support of ISTAS and public authorities a brochure (in ES only: [Cuando los medicamentos son un riesgo: Información para el personal sanitario](#)) on hazardous drugs and what can be done by the health personnel to avoid, prevent or reduce them. At the Plenary Meeting 2017 of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for the Hospital/Health Care Sector on 30 November 2017 in Brussels the colleagues of FSS-CC.OO had illustrated their work to better prevent exposure to and/or to reduce risks linked to

the manipulation or use of cytotoxic drugs. They [showcased](#) the trade union interventions and actions needed in relation to awareness-raising, information and mobilisation of the workers concerned and also as to the "scandalisation" of lacking initiatives and measures by hospital employers to improve the protection of health workers against the risks stemming from hazardous drugs.

At the event two new publications of the ETUI were presented. First edition n° 18 of the HESAMag, "Work-related cancer: emerging from obscurity", focusing on the topic of occupational cancer and what trade unions can do to address it. It is available in [EN](#) and [FR](#) and also covers the story of Georgina Augusto in more detail. Second, the [book "Cancer and work: understanding occupational cancers and taking action to eliminate them"](#), edited by Tony Musu and Laurent Vogel.

 [Belgium](#)

- [Log in](#) to post comments

- [Printer-friendly version](#)

Policies

[Equality](#)

[Health](#)

[Health and Safety](#)

Sectors

[Health and Social Services](#)

Networks

[Women & Gender Equality](#)