



Stop Cancer at Work welcomes European Parliament's further protection for workers and healthcare professionals from exposure to hazardous medicinal products

(Press release, Brussels 7 September 2023) The Stop Cancer at Work coalition welcomes the overwhelming vote today in the Employment Committee of the European Parliament for better protection for workers and healthcare professionals from potentially life-threatening hazardous medicinal products (HMPs).

We urge the European Commission and the European Council to formally adopt and implement the amendments in the trilogue on the Carcinogens, Mutagens and Reprotoxic Substances Directive (CMRD) later this year.

The committee has approved the legal definition of HMPs to be included in the main body and Annex of the CMRD, underlining their classification as category 1A or 1B carcinogens, mutagens or reprotoxic substances. This definition was already included in the new EU guidance on handling HMPs published by the Commission and European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) earlier this year.

For more than a decade, the campaign has been campaigning for better protection for workers and healthcare professionals exposed to these potentially life-threatening drugs. Every year more than 12.7 million healthcare workers in the EU are potentially exposed to HMPs which can mutate our DNA, cause cancer or are toxic to fertility and babies.

Employers, workers, healthcare professionals and Member States now all need to work together to raise awareness of the risks of HMPs, increase best practice and ensure that the guidance and the legislation are properly implemented and applied in all EU countries.

Similarly, the Commission should also adopt and use the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) list to indicate which HMPs fall under the legislative scope of the EU. The European Commission has started to prepare and publish the indicative list of HMPs required by the CMRD but it should also be published sooner rather than later and does not need to wait until April 2025 which is the final legal deadline.

We further welcome the European Parliament's clear demand for stronger protection for firefighters and emergency services. The Parliament not only acknowledged the WHO - IARC classification of the professional exposure as a firefighter as carcinogenic (Group 1) but also used its legislative powers to trigger immediate change also by explicitly calling on the European Commission to protect professions such as firefighting that are inherently carcinogenic.

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 Institute (ETUI)

www.stopcanceratwork.eu

As a coalition of essential workers, professionals and cancer patients, the Campaign is demanding action from policymakers and political leaders at the European and national level to stop further preventable cancer deaths.

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.

Good practice is set out in the new EU guidelines on HMPs and safer technology and protective equipment are available and not costly.

In March 2022, the European Parliament and European Council defined "hazardous medicinal products as substances which meet the criteria for classification as carcinogenic (categories 1A or 1B), mutagenic (categories 1A or 1B) or reprotoxic (categories 1A or 1B) in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 fall under the scope of Directive 2004/37/EC."