

Safety at work: protection of workers against exposure to carcinogens agents

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The rapporteur, Mrs Stenius-Kaukonen (GUE/NGL, FIN), expressed support for the proposal to extend the scope of the 1990 Directive on the exposure of workers to the risk of cancer at the workplace. However, she rejected a compromise on concentration limits for benzene in the air, as proposed by the Commission (1 ppm exposure over a period of 8 hours), proposing instead a long-term reduction of 0.1 ppm in the limit value for occupational exposure. Commissioner Flynn stated that he could not accept Amendments Nos 11, 14 and 15 as these would negate the temporary exemptions required in certain industrial sectors in order to comply with the benzene tolerability threshold, though this would not rule out the possibility of a future reduction in the limit period for exposure to this carcinogenic substance. Finally, Amendments Nos 17, 18, 19 and 20 could not be taken over, as they were incompatible with the exemptions in place; Amendments Nos 3, 4, 7 and 10 were also rejected because they were not in keeping with the wording of the Directive. However, the Commission was prepared to implement the proposal for a uniform procedure for benzene testing (Amendment No 16).