

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

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The Committee adopted the report by Mrs Marjatta STENIUS-KAUKONEN (FIN, GUE/NGL) on a Commission proposal to amend Directive 90/394/EEC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens at work. The rapporteur welcomed the Commission's proposal to extend the scope of the directive to cover, inter alia, medicinal products, cosmetics, waste, pesticides, explosives and foodstuffs. The widening of the scope of application is important and logical, since the risks of workers does not depend on the use to which the chemical agents are put. It is also important to know how and by whom these medicins, cosmetics, explosives etc. were deemed to be carcinogenic. A specific course of action must be worked out to produce a speedy classification e.g. in the area of the chemicals in the extended area of application. The risks of cancer from heavy metals will increase perceptibly in the future. This will, says the rapporteur, become apparent as the section of the population which hasbeen exposed to these begins to age. Urgent measures must be taken to set limit values for new heavy metals. Arsenic has been shown with certainty to cause human skin cancer. There are therefore reasons for setting a limit value for arsenic as well as for benzene. The Committee adopted amendments proposing a limit value of 0,01 mg/m³ in an average period of 8 hours.