

Health and security at work: protection of workers from the exposure to carcinogens (amend. Directive 90/394/EEC)

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Adopting the report by Mr Quinidio Correia (PES, P) on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens at work, Parliament considers it highly probable that dust from other types of hardwood can also cause cancer. The precautionary principle should therefore be applied to protect workers and consequently, the directive should cover dust from all types of hardwood. For this reason, Parliament proposes that the limit value of 5.0 mg/m³ advocated by the directive apply to all hardwood dusts (including mixtures of different hardwoods). Parliament calls for further research into the carcinogenic properties of other wood dusts. On the basis of scientific data, the Commission could present, within five years of this directive, a proposal to adopt revised limit values for vinyl chloride monomer and wood dust. The directive is to come into force within three years of its adoption. To safeguard employment, the provisions related to wood dusts will apply to existing places of work only after a transitional period. In order to avoid any misunderstanding as to the purpose of the directive, Parliament points out that implementation does not aim to restrict the processing of hardwoods by craft workers or the use of such materials or to replace them by other types of wood. The purpose is solely to provide effective protection for workers against the risks of developing cancer as a result of exposure to wood dust at work, as it is known that the risk of developing cancer is related to exposure of wood dust and not wood itself.