

# Protecting workers against cancer-causing chemicals: Statement by Commissioner Thyssen following the agreement between the EU institutions

Today, the European Parliament and the Council came to an agreement on the [Commission's second proposal to broaden the list of recognised cancer-causing chemicals in the workplace](#). With this agreement, 8 additional cancer-causing chemicals will be covered by the [Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive](#), including diesel exhaust. Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, welcomed the agreement with the following statement:

*"Today we took another important step in protecting European workers from work-related cancer. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, reached an agreement on legislation covering a further eight cancer-causing chemicals, including diesel exhaust. This will ensure better protection for more than 20 million workers in Europe. Workers in the chemical, metal and car industry, professional drivers, construction workers and workers in the dock and warehouse sector, in particular, will benefit. At the same time, it will make our internal market simpler and fairer, with particular attention to help small and micro-enterprises comply with health and safety rules.*

*I extend my thanks to all parties who made this result possible, and would like to acknowledge in particular the efforts made by the Austrian Presidency and its predecessors on behalf of the Council, as well as rapporteur Claude Rolin and the shadow rapporteurs on behalf of the European Parliament.*

*I hope this agreement will be confirmed quickly, so we can make a real difference on the ground and prevent more than 100,000 cancer deaths over the next 50 years."*

## **Next steps**

The agreement will be submitted to the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) for approval. Once the Member States' Permanent Representatives confirm the agreement, it will be subject to a vote by the plenary of the European Parliament.

## **Background**

Fighting work-related cancer and creating a healthier and safer workplace is a priority for this Commission and a core principle of our European Pillar of Social Rights. Evidence shows that this focus is justified: with 52% of all work-related deaths, cancer remains the biggest silent killer in the workplace. While the majority of Member States have national exposure limits

for many cancer-causing chemicals, some Member States are less stringent. This means that workers are not equally protected across the Single Market and that there is no level playing field for businesses.

As scientific knowledge about cancer-causing chemicals is constantly evolving, the Commission supports a continuous process of updating the [Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive \(Directive 2004/37/EC\)](#).

The Juncker Commission has taken decisive action to update the legislation on the protection of workers against cancer-causing chemicals. The Commission launched its [first proposal in May 2016](#), which has already been adopted as a Directive by the co-legislators at the end of 2017. Today's provisional agreement marks one of the final steps in the negotiation stage of the [second proposal from January 2017](#). In April 2018, the Commission submitted a [third proposal to strengthen the protection of workers against cancer-causing chemicals](#). 22 cancer-causing chemicals are now covered by the Directive, of which 21 have been added since the start of this Commission mandate.

These initiatives are part of the Commission's broader effort to improve health and safety standards at the workplace throughout Europe. In this context, the Commission has started an [in-depth review and update of the existing legislation in January 2017](#).

#### **For more information**

[MEMO: Commission follows up on workers' protection from cancer-causing chemicals: frequently asked questions](#)

Follow Marianne Thyssen on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

[News item on the website of DG Employment](#)

Subscribe to the European Commission's free e-mail [newsletter](#) on employment, social affairs and inclusion