

Topic: Respirable Crystalline Silica – Social Dialogue project

Brief description and main aims:

In 2016 the European Commission started a revision of the “Carcinogens and Mutagens” Directive (2004/37/EC) which led (at the end of the legislative procedure) to the inclusion within the scope of this Directive of various substances, including “Respirable Crystalline Silica” (RCS).

By doing so the EU legislator recognises RCS as being a carcinogenic substance and introduced a binding OEL (occupational exposure level) of 0,1 mg/m³, which now becomes mandatory in all the Member States.

In 2020, in the course of the 4th revision of the “Carcinogens and Mutagens” Directive, the European Parliament even requested that the OEL for RCS be lowered to 0,05 mg/m³. Trilogue negotiations are still ongoing.

Why FIEC is dealing with this topic:

Crystalline silica is an essential material, with the substance having an abundance of uses in industry and being a vital component in many things used in our everyday lives. It is impossible to imagine houses without bricks, mortar or windows, cars without engines or windscreens, or life without everyday items made of glass or pottery. It is therefore present in most of construction-related activities.

For many years, it has been known that the inhalation of fine dust containing a proportion of crystalline silica can cause lung damage (silicosis).

The EU sectoral social partners for the construction industry FIEC, representing the employers, and EFBWW (European Federation of Building and Wood Workers), representing the workers, have submitted a joint project aiming at identifying best practice examples and elaborating guidelines for helping companies and workers in complying with the requirements of the modified “Carcinogens” Directive.

Actions and key dates:

12/12/2017 – Adoption of the amended “Carcinogens” Directive (2017/2398/EC)

March 2020 – Start of the project

02/06/2020 – 1st meeting of the Steering Group

21/01/2021 – public workshop (with more than 100 participants from many different countries)

April 2021 – FIEC letters to the European Parliament to warn against a further lowering of the OEL for RCS

04/10/2021 – 6th meeting of the Steering Group

18/01/2022 – Final conference

March 2022 – End of the project