

## Topic: Revision of the “Asbestos at Work” Directive (2009/148/EC)

### Brief description and main aims:

Good occupational safety and health, including protection of workers from exposure to carcinogens, is top priority for the European Commission.

The European Commission considers that improved protection of workers exposed to asbestos will be important in the context of the green transition, which is at the heart of this Commission’s agenda, and of recovery from the effects of COVID-19. Indeed, exposure limit values on asbestos play an important role in the renovation of buildings.

The current binding occupational exposure limit value (OEL) for asbestos is 0.1 fibres/cm<sup>3</sup> as an eight-hour time-weighted average (TWA). The European Commission considers that the existing OEL should be amended in order to take account of the most recent knowledge, scientific development and technical progress.

In parallel, the European Parliament is also working on this issue, with a legislative own-initiative report by MEP Nikolaj Villumsen (Left-DK). The Rapporteur also advocates for a drastic lowering of the OEL for asbestos.

### Why FIEC is dealing with this topic:

Asbestos is a key occupational carcinogenic agent which has been used worldwide for decades in building. Although this substance is no longer in general use in the EU, there is a substantial legacy problem due to its presence in many older buildings that are likely to be renovated, adapted or demolished over the coming years.

These works present a potential risk that workers will be exposed to asbestos, and it is important that it is carried out in a controlled way by suitably trained workers and under the proper supervision their employers.

This is currently an important topic, not only under Union action on prevention and the protection of workers but also due to the EU-wide need to improve the thermal insulation of the built environment and enable energy savings, in line with the EU Green Deals’ Renovation Wave initiative.

However, most EU Member States have already implemented strict limit values and measures in this field and FIEC is worried that a further lowering of the OEL at EU level will become unrealistic for construction companies to comply with.

### Actions and key dates:

**11/02/2021** – [FIEC contribution](#) to the European Commission’s social partners’ consultation (1<sup>st</sup> phase) on the protection of workers from risks related to exposure to asbestos at work

**03/03/2021** – Interview with external consultants in charge of impact assessment study on behalf of the European Commission

**23/04/2021** – Meeting with MEP Villumsen on his legislative own-initiative draft report

**20/09/2021** – [FIEC contribution](#) to the European Commission’s social partners’ consultation (2<sup>nd</sup> phase)

**27/09/2021** – Adoption of Villumsen report in the EMPL Committee

**2022** – Expected revision proposal by the European Commission