

Topic: « Reducing Respirable Crystalline Silica Dust effectively »– 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 wave of the “Carcinogens and Mutagens” Directive, the European Parliament even requested that the OEL for RCS be lowered to 0,05 mg/m³. However, this proposal has not been accepted by the COUNCIL.

Why FIEC is dealing with this topic:

Crystalline silica is a 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. 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).

Against this background, 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 undertaken a joint project aiming at identifying best practices and elaborating guidelines – according to a traffic light system – for helping companies and workers in complying with the requirements of the modified “Carcinogens and Mutagens” Directive, i.e. working with low-dust practices.

Actions and key dates:

12/12/2017 – Adoption of the amended “Carcinogens and Mutagens” Directive (2017/2398/EC) (1st revision wave)

March 2020 – Start of the project

21/01/2021 – Public Workshop (with more than 100 participants from many countries)

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

18/01/2022 – Final conference (with more than 100 participants from many countries)

January 2022 – [Publication of final deliverables](#): research paper and “mapping”

16/02/2022 – 7th (final) meeting of the Steering Group

March 2022 – End of the project

March 2022 – Adoption of amended “Carcinogens, Mutagens and Reprotoxic substances” Directive (2022/431/EU) (4th revision wave), with silica OEL untouched

September 2022 – “RCSD” project receives award price in Germany