



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION

The Director-General

Brussels,
EMPL/B.3/ZP/vd (2020) 8447242

For the attention of the Social
Partners Organisations

Subject: First phase consultation of the social partners under Article 154 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, on the protection of workers from risks related to exposure to chemical agents at work and to asbestos at work

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

A strong social Europe calls for constant improvements towards safer and healthier work for all. As outlined in the Communication ‘A strong social Europe for just transitions’¹, the Union is facing a wide range of social, economic and technological developments. In this light the Commission committed to review the occupational safety and health strategic framework to address new risks, alongside the more traditional ones such as exposure to dangerous substances. Covid-19 reinforced the need for action in this area.

Ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for workers in the EU is a strategic goal set out in the Commission Communication on the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020². One of the main challenges identified in this framework is to improve the prevention of work-related diseases by tackling existing, new, and emerging risks.

In her 2020 State of the Union address³, President von der Leyen underlined health as a top EU priority. Good occupational safety and health, including protection of workers from exposure to carcinogens, reprotoxins and other hazardous chemicals will contribute to this priority, and will also be an important contribution to ‘Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan’.

¹ COM(2020) 14 final, 14.1.2020

² COM(2014) 332 final, 6.6.2014

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/soteu_2020_en.pdf

In this context, the Commission would like to consult the social partners on the possible direction of EU action concerning revisions of Directive 98/24/EC⁴ on the protection of the health and safety of workers from the risks related to **chemical agents** at work (Chemical Agents Directive), the fourteenth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Directive 89/391/EEC⁵, as well as Directive 2009/148/EC⁶ on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to **asbestos** at work (Asbestos at Work Directive).

Furthermore, the Commission would like to identify possibilities to improve the existing EU legal framework in this field, based on this consultation of the social partners under Article 154 TFEU. It also asks if you would consider initiating a dialogue under Article 155 TFEU on any of the issues identified.

I would be grateful to receive your responses to this consultation by **11 February 2021**.

Please send your replies to EMPL-SOCIAL-DIALOGUE@ec.europa.eu.



Joost KORTE

Annex: First phase social partners' consultation document

⁴ Council Directive 98/24/EC of 7 April 1998 on the protection of the health and safety of workers from the risks related to chemical agents at work, (OJ L 131, 5.5.1998, p. 11-23)

⁵ Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work, (OJ L 183, 29.6.1989, p. 1-8)

⁶ Directive 2009/148/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work, (OJ L 330, 16.12.2009, p. 28-36)