

Asbestos at Work

FIEC and EBC call for a pragmatic approach with a realistic and implementable framework

On the backdrop of the ongoing trilogue negotiations on the revision of the “Asbestos at Work” Directive (2009/148/EC), the *European Construction Industry Federation* (FIEC) and the *European Builders Confederation* (EBC) emphasise the importance for the EU Council to apply a pragmatic approach towards reaching agreement on a realistic and implementable framework for construction companies.

Since construction workers’ health and safety are a top priority for employers in the construction industry, FIEC and EBC stress that EU legislation must play its role of protecting workers from the risks related to the exposure of asbestos at work. For this purpose, FIEC and EBC reiterate that focusing on an extremely low occupational exposure limit value (OELV) to asbestos fibres is no “silver bullet” for an adequate protection of workers.

FIEC and EBC recall that optimal protection conditions for the workforce will only be possible if the limit allows for realistic implementation, monitoring and evaluation by construction companies, reinforced by national measures of technical and financial support, as well as general guidance towards the new framework. If companies are not able to apply limit values or other new specific requirements, they will not be able to meet the intent of workers’ protection.

In this context, FIEC and EBC share **common recommendations**:

- **Lowering the OELV** below the value put forward by the European Commission’s proposal (= 0.01 fibres/cm³) would be **unrealistic** and counter-productive;
- A 3 or 4-year transition period is not enough for construction companies and must be extended; the **7-year transition period** proposed by the Council is **more appropriate**;

- A **revision clause** at the short or medium term would be **highly counterproductive** as it would trigger uncertainty among businesses and disincentivise efforts and investments to adapt;
- A **too strict certification or notification schemes or other additional administrative burdens** might have a **deterrent effect**, in times where all construction companies are needed to deliver the *Renovation Wave*;
- It is necessary to increase the **technical and financial support for training, awareness-raising and exchange of best practices** on asbestos removal for employers, workers and inspectors;
- A Directive on the **screening and registration of asbestos** is being developed as a **separate legislative vehicle** and should not be anticipated, although consistency will be required;
- Construction enterprises need a facilitated access and **appropriate number of adapted waste facilities for asbestos** within an acceptable distance and cost, including cross-border ones.

FIEC and EBC look forward to cooperating with the European institutions to identify the best ways to help construction companies minimise the risks related to asbestos and maximise the protection of workers.

About FIEC and EBC

FIEC represents - via its 32 National member federations in 27 countries (24 EU, Norway, Switzerland & Ukraine) - construction enterprises of all sizes, i.e. small and medium-sized enterprises as well as “global players”, carrying out all forms of building and civil engineering activities. FIEC is also the officially recognised Social Partner, representing employers, in the EU sectoral Social Dialogue for Construction.

EBC was established in 1990 as the European professional organisation representing national employer associations of construction micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and crafts. EBC is part of the employers’ delegation in the EU sectoral Social Dialogue for Construction. EBC is a member of *SMEUnited*, the European association of SMEs, and founding partner of *Small Business Standards* (SBS), the European association representing SMEs in standardisation.

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