

**FIEC** is the European Construction Industry Federation, representing via its 33 National Member Federations in 29 countries (25 EU, Norway, Switzerland, Ukraine & Turkey) 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.



# POSITION PAPER

20/09/2021

## **FIEC contribution to the European Commission's social partners' consultation on the protection of workers from risks related to exposure to chemical agents (lead and diisocyanates) at work and to asbestos at work (2<sup>nd</sup> phase)**

*Reference: consultation document C(2021) 4529 final, dated 28/06/2021*

### **QUESTIONS TO THE SOCIAL PARTNERS**

- **What are your views on the possible avenues for EU action, potential impacts and the elements set out in section 5 of this document and the analytical document?**

Worker's health and safety is a topic of prime importance in the construction sector. Collaboration between social partners and the European Commission is key to reach a European Union without asbestos. However, to achieve this goal, the exposure limits must remain achievable. We currently do not have the measurement equipment required to achieve this limit value. This could result in asbestos not being removed of some buildings because the level of ambition cannot be achieved. Besides, unrealistic exposure limits should not hinder the completion of objectives set out in the “Renovation Wave” and in the “Circular Economy Actions Plan”. Finally, the introduction of such a low limit value could encourage the creation of “cowboy” companies, which will falsely claim to be able to reach this level of exposure at a lower cost.

As a consequence, we believe that the exposure limits to asbestos should remain unchanged. Although, we think that actions are needed at European level in order to better coordinate policies taken by the different Member States. Guidance documents containing recommendations and best practices on how to protect workers from exposure are an appropriate tools for minimizing the risks related to the exposure of workers to asbestos. In this area, ambitions levels vary greatly among Member States and sometimes even among regions. We also believe that compulsory screening measures for buildings before sale or rent, and asbestos certificates for buildings constructed before a certain date are effective ways to reduce workers exposure to asbestos. As a conclusion, we would like to highlight the importance of training qualified workers to the removal of asbestos.

- **Are the social partners willing to enter into negotiations with a view to concluding an agreement with regard to any of the elements set out in section 5 of this document under Article 155 TFEU?**

Social partners of the construction sector are willing to enter into negotiations and to rely on their expertise to develop guidance documents and brochures including best practices and recommendations on how to best protect workers against the risk of exposure to asbestos.

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