

FIEC is the European Construction Industry Federation representing, via its 32 national member federations in 27 countries (24 EU & Norway, Switzerland, and 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.



PRESS RELEASE

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REVISION OF THE ASBESTOS DIRECTIVE UNREALISTIC DEMANDS BY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On 26 April, the Employment and Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament (EP) is expected to adopt its report on the revision of the asbestos at work directive. The European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) warns again that the proposals put forward are far from being realistic in terms of implementation and will have a very significant financial impact on construction companies and their clients.

According to the information gathered concerning the draft compromise amendments currently being discussed in the EP, it is expected that **the occupational exposure limit value (OEL) will be lowered by 100 times compared with the current OEL; that is, to 0.001 fibres/cm³, within 4 years after entry into force of the revised Directive**, together with an upgrade to electron microscopy.

However, according to some estimations done at national level, **where the OEL had been lowered by 10 times**, over a period of several years, **the costs of the whole asbestos removal process had been multiplied by 3 to 4 times**, depending on the type of works to be done.

These additional costs include the adaptation to new and longer procedures, upgraded protective individual, collective and environmental equipment, heavier measurement procedures and waste management. By contrast, these costs do not take into account the additional costs implied for laboratories to buy new machines and upskill their staff, which will have to be added up to this estimation.

Amongst other worrying aspects, it is expected that **the concept of “sporadic and low intensity exposure” will be deleted from the Directive**. This will most probably lead to a change in the market structure, pushing out of the market most construction companies which deal with asbestos from time to time only, to the benefit of specialised companies. A reduced number of market players will lead to longer delays and even higher costs for the clients, as it is already the case in some EU Member States.

The protection of health and safety of the workers has always been on top of FIEC’s agenda and will remain a priority. However, FIEC is extremely worried that the European Parliament’s proposals will not be at all realistic in terms of implementation by professionals, with the risk that too costly and rigid rules will be a deterrent for companies and their clients to work within the legal framework and for homeowners in general to undertake expensive renovation works. A more realistic approach would be sticking to the European Commission’s proposal for an OEL lowered to 0.01 fibres/cm³, coupled with a transition period of at least 5 years.

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