

PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM ASBESTOS



September 2022

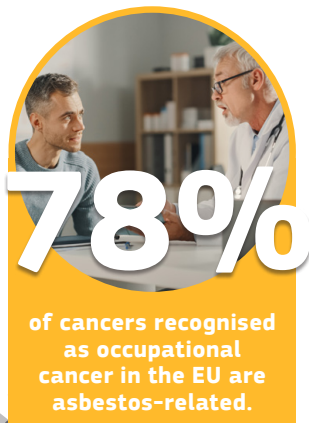
#AsbestosFreeEurope #SocialRights
#EUCancerPlan

What is asbestos and why do we need to act?

- Asbestos is a highly **dangerous, cancer-causing substance**.
- The main threat to human health occurs when materials that contain asbestos are disturbed and **fibres can be released in the air and inhaled**, like when old buildings are renovated.
- All use of **asbestos has been banned in the EU since 2005**. But asbestos is still present in many buildings, posing a risk to residents and workers, mainly in construction.
- Addressing the health risks of exposure to asbestos is **essential to protect people's health and the environment** as well as ensure **decent living and working conditions**.
- This is ever more urgent given the EU's ambition to **double the annual rate of energy renovations of buildings by 2030**, which are responsible for more than one third of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions.

The Commission is acting to **achieve an asbestos-free Europe** for current and future generations.

The actions we take now will have a strong positive health impact in the decades to come and will contribute to **Europe's Beating Cancer Plan**.



European Pillar of Social Rights

Principle 10: *Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection*

"Workers have the right to a high level of protection of their health and safety at work."

How can we better protect people from asbestos and achieve an asbestos-free future?

The Commission sets out existing and new measures to tackle the issue of asbestos, covering the following areas:

1 Supporting victims of asbestos-related diseases

- consulting the tripartite Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work on including additional asbestos-related diseases as **occupational diseases**
- proposed update to the Council Recommendation on **cancer screening**
- launching the **European Cancer Imaging Initiative**

2 Protecting workers against exposure to asbestos

- lowering the current **occupational exposure limit** to asbestos
- offering **guidelines** on implementation
- launching an **awareness-raising** campaign on the safe removal of asbestos aimed at companies, workers, owners and public administrations

3 Addressing asbestos present in buildings

- legislative proposal on the **screening and registration of asbestos** in buildings
- developing **national asbestos removal strategies**
- introducing **digital building logbooks**

4 Ensuring safe disposal of asbestos waste and zero pollution

- revising the protocol and guidelines on **construction and demolition waste management**
- launching a study to identify asbestos waste management **best practices**

5 Providing EU financing support to Member States for better health prevention and treatment as well as renovations and the safe removal of asbestos; and

6 Positioning the EU as a global leader in the fight against asbestos together with international partners.

The Commission proposes to **amend the Asbestos at Work Directive** to reduce the occupational exposure limit for asbestos to **10 times lower than the current value** (from 0.1 fibres per cubic centimetre (f/cm³) to 0.01 f/cm³).

This allows for a **more uniform protection of workers** across the EU on the basis of the latest scientific and technological developments. It also creates a **level playing field for businesses** and **prevents higher healthcare costs** for medical treatment in the future.