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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

**on supporting the implementation of Directive 2009/148/EC on the protection of workers
from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work as amended by Directive
2023/2668**

{SWD(2025) 400 final}

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1 Introduction

The EU strategic framework on health and safety at work 2021-2027¹ ('EU OSH strategic framework') aims to turn principle 10 of the European Pillar of Social Rights² which covers workers' right to a high level of protection of their health and safety at work into concrete actions. One of the priorities under the EU OSH strategic framework is tackling work-related exposure to asbestos, in order to contribute to its key objective of preventing work-related deaths and illnesses.

Beating cancer is a priority of the Union. The Commission is committed to effectively reducing exposure to carcinogenic substances, such as asbestos and is thus significantly contributing to cancer prevention in line with the objectives of Europe's beating cancer plan³.

Asbestos is a dangerous, cancer-causing substance⁴ that continues to affect many workers in various sectors, where exposure risks remain high. These include construction, mining, quarrying, civil engineering, waste management, or the maintenance of ships, trains, aircrafts, vehicles and machinery, as well as emergency services such as firefighting. It is estimated that 4.1 to 7.3 million workers in the Union are still exposed to asbestos.⁵

Occupational exposure to asbestos is known to have severe health consequences. When inhaled, airborne asbestos fibres can cause serious diseases such as mesothelioma and lung cancer. On average, it takes 30 years from the moment of exposure for the first signs of illness to appear, and these conditions may ultimately lead to work-related deaths. Exposure to asbestos is a major cause of occupational cancer in the Union, accounting for as much as 78 % of occupational cancers, and 88% of occupational lung cancers, recognised in the Member States as being related to this exposure.⁶

Asbestos was widely used for decades across Europe in a wide range of applications, especially in construction, creating a legacy that continues to pose a threat to public health and hinder efforts to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for exposed workers. Greater protection for workers from asbestos exposure is particularly important in the context of the European Green Deal, as energy-efficiency renovations are essential to achieving

¹[Communication from the Commission on EU strategic framework on health and safety at work 2021-2027 Occupational safety and health in a changing world of work, COM/2021/323 final.](#)

²[Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights, \(OJ C 428, 13.12.2017, p. 10\).](#)

³[Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, COM\(2021\) 44 final](#)

⁴[Arsenic, Metals, Fibres, and Dusts, IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans Volume 100C](#)

⁵[Study on collecting information on substances with the view to analyse health, socio-economic and environmental impacts in connection with possible amendments of Directive 98/24/EC \(Chemical Agents\) and Directive 2009/148/EC \(Asbestos\), Final report for asbestos](#)

⁶[Commission Communication on working towards an asbestos-free future: a European approach to addressing the health risks of asbestos, COM\(2022\) 488 final](#)

its objectives⁷. The renovation wave strategy⁸ aims to double the annual rate of energy renovations by 2030. However, since many buildings with poor energy performance contain asbestos, accelerating the renovation rate could significantly increase the number of people exposed to asbestos-related health risks, as asbestos present in buildings could be released during the renovation work. The number of workers exposed to asbestos is expected to increase by 4% every year up to 2030.⁹ Further action to manage the exposure risks is crucial to protect workers from disease, promote their well-being, and help strengthen the European Health Union.

Over the past 40 years, the Union has taken significant action to initially limit and ultimately ban all use of asbestos. Between 1983¹⁰ and 1985,¹¹ it restricted the use of six types of asbestos fibres. In 1991, it banned the placing on the market and use of five of those types¹², and the use of chrysotile asbestos in products widely used in the construction sector, amongst others¹³. Directive 1999/77/EC¹⁴ banned the use and placing on the market of all six types of asbestos fibres, with the ban taking effect in 2005. That Directive was repealed by the 2006 Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council¹⁵ where all intentionally added asbestos continues to be banned. The entry number 6 in its Annex XVII states that the manufacturing, placing on the market, and use of asbestos fibres

⁷[Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – The European Green Deal, COM/2019/640 final.](#)

⁸ [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - A Renovation Wave for Europe - greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives, COM/2020/662 final.](#)

⁹ [Based on current notifications, the increasing trend of the amount of asbestos-containing waste, the number of certified workers and the lifespan of the asbestos cement materials \(70-80% of asbestos in EU\). Source: RPA \(2021\) external study, see footnote 7.](#)

¹⁰ [Restrictions on the use of crocidolite by Council Directive 83/478/EEC of 19 September 1983 amending for the fifth time \(asbestos\) Directive 76/769/EEC on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States relating to restrictions on the marketing and use of certain dangerous substances and preparations \(OJ L 263, 24.9.1983, p. 33\)](#) - introducing restrictions on asbestos into [Council Directive 76/769/EEC of 27 July 1976 on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States relating to restrictions on the marketing and use of certain dangerous substances and preparations \(OJ L 262, 27.9.1976, pp. 201\)](#)

¹¹ [Restrictions on the use of Chrysotile, Amosite, Anthophyllite, Actinolite and Tremolite, in toys, products for spraying or in powder form, insulation devices, paints and varnishes, Council Directive 85/610/EEC of 20 December 1985 amending for the seventh time \(asbestos\) Directive 76/769/EEC on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States relating to restrictions on the marketing and use of certain dangerous substances and preparations, \(OJ L 375, 31.12.1985, p. 1\).](#)

¹² Crocidolite, Amosite, Anthophyllite, Actinolite and Tremolite

¹³ Certain devices, paints and varnishes, filters for liquids, road surfacing material, fillers and sealants, low density insulating or soundproofing materials, air filters and filters for gas, underlays for plastic floor and wall coverings, textiles (with a temporary exception for diaphragms) and roofing felt.

¹⁴ [Commission Directive 1999/77/EC of 26 July 1999 adapting to technical progress for the sixth time Annex I to Council Directive 76/769/EEC on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States relating to restrictions on the marketing and use of certain dangerous substances and preparations \(asbestos\) \(OJ L 207, 6.8.1999, p. 18, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1999/77/oj>\), no longer in force, with the transposition deadline of 1 January 2005.](#)

¹⁵ [Regulation \(EC\) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals \(REACH\), establishing a European Chemicals Agency, amending Directive 1999/45/EC and repealing Council Regulation \(EEC\) No 793/93 and Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 1488/94 as well as Council Directive 76/769/EEC and Commission Directives 91/155/EEC, 93/67/EEC, 93/105/EC and 2000/21/EC \(OJ L 396, 30.12.2006, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2006/1907/oj>\).](#)

as well as mixtures and articles (in which asbestos fibres have been added intentionally) are prohibited in the Union. As regards the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work, it is afforded by Directive 2009/148/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council¹⁶ that codified and repealed Council Directive 83/477/EEC¹⁷, Council Directive 91/382/EEC¹⁸ and Directive 2003/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council¹⁹.

Today, the Union is still strongly committed to supporting its Member States in creating and promoting quality jobs while improving fair working conditions to safeguard workers' safety and health. The 2023 amendment of Directive 2009/148/EC puts this aim at its core. This latest amendment of Directive 2009/148/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council by Directive 2023/2668 of the European Parliament and of the Council²⁰ which revised the occupational exposure limit value for asbestos (from 0.1 to 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre)²¹ helps achieve a higher level of protection of workers' health and safety, in particular from this highly carcinogenic substance. The guidelines²² accompanying this Communication are presented as a follow-up to the Commission Communication on an asbestos-free future as well as the amendment of Directive 2009/148/EC.

In this regard, recital 29 of Directive 2023/2668 (EU) amending Directive 2009/148/EC highlights the importance of developing and issuing guidelines to facilitate the implementation of the Directive 2009/148/EC, no later than two years from the date of its entry into force.

The guidelines will ultimately enable the Union to respond more efficiently to the need to better protect workers from asbestos exposure by providing examples of how this hazardous substance should be handled in practice. They will also contribute to the objectives of the Competitiveness Compass for the EU²³, which provides, in particular, for increasing the speed and quality of decision-making by simplifying Union frameworks and rules. In

¹⁶ [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 \(Codified version\), \(OJ L 330, 16.12.2009, p. 28, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2009/148/oj>\).](#)

¹⁷ [Council Directive 83/477/EEC of 19 September 1983 on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work \(second individual Directive within the meaning of Article 8 of Directive 80/1107/EEC\), OJ L 263, 24.9.1983, p. 25.](#)

¹⁸ [Council Directive 91/382/EEC of 25 June 1991 amending Directive 83/477/EEC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work \(second individual Directive within the meaning of Article 8 of Directive 80/1107/EEC\), OJ L 206, 29.7.1991, p. 16.](#)

¹⁹ [Directive 2003/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 March 2003 amending Council Directive 83/477/EEC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work \(Text with EEA relevance\), OJ L 97, 15.4.2003, p. 48.](#)

²⁰ [Directive \(EU\) 2023/2668 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 November 2023 amending Directive 2009/148/EC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work, OJ L, 2023/2668, 30.11.2023, ELI](#)

²¹ The new Article 8 of Directive 2009/148/EC states the following: “1. Until 20 December 2029, employers shall ensure that no worker is exposed to an airborne concentration of asbestos in excess of 0,01 fibres per cm³ as an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA). 2. From 21 December 2029, employers shall ensure that no worker is exposed to an airborne concentration of asbestos in excess of: (a) 0,01 fibres per cm³ as an 8-hour TWA in accordance with Article 7(7), second subparagraph; or (b) 0,002 fibres per cm³ as an 8-hour TWA.”

²² SWD(2025)400 https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/70526012-b741-4092-ab52-3bae8de2a1b0_en

²³ [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions a Competitiveness Compass for the EU, COM/2025/30](#)

addition, they also contribute to the objectives set out in the Commission's Communication on implementation and simplification²⁴, as they will improve the implementation of Directive 2009/148/EC by making the rules mentioned therein clearer, easier to understand and faster to implement by stakeholders.

2 Objectives

The Union-wide guidelines for handling asbestos are designed to facilitate companies' compliance and support Member States' enforcement efforts, with the overarching aim of protecting workers. Member States, employers (especially small and medium-sized enterprises, which make up 99% of all companies working with asbestos²⁵), social partners, and workers will benefit from this additional support to ensure compliance.

The guidelines aim to:

- help stakeholders manage asbestos related health and safety risks at work taking into account recent legal, scientific and technological developments, including the 2023 amendment of Directive 2009/148/EC;
- raise awareness of the risks of handling materials containing asbestos among employers and workers;
- encourage greater adoption of good practices across Member States by providing an overview of asbestos management strategies in the workplace;
- reduce disparities in access to guidance by providing additional information on good practices to stakeholders across the Union, including those in Member States where less guidance is available.

The guidelines provide an overview of good practices in managing asbestos at work, outlining practical ways to reduce workers' exposure. The good practices set out in these guidelines are offered as examples and should not be considered as the only means of implementing Union occupational safety and health legislation. The guidelines are designed for all types of organisations, both public and private, of all sizes and they apply to a wide range of sectors.

All stakeholders, including trade unions, employer' organisations, businesses, national authorities and experts in occupational safety and health, are encouraged to use and disseminate these guidelines as widely as possible.

²⁴[Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - A simpler and faster Europe: Communication on implementation and simplification, COM/2025/47 final](#)

²⁵[Source: RPA \(2021\) external study, see footnote 7.](#)

3 Structure

The guidelines are structured in modules, allowing the readers to focus on topics of specific interest. They are divided into two parts:

- the first 12 sections cover general topics and apply to all exposure situations, providing information on asbestos management in general;
- the last five sections cover specific asbestos exposure situations, offering sector-specific guidance on how asbestos can be handled safely, with references to the general sections where appropriate.

4 Broad consultation of stakeholders

The guidelines were developed with the extensive involvement of stakeholders, such as trade unions, employers' organisations, businesses, national authorities and experts on occupational health and safety. This included:

- identifying 187 existing guidance documents at Member State, Union and international level, of which 91 were assessed as potentially relevant and examined in detail;
- organising 10 online workshops with over 850 attendees, each focusing on different areas covered by the guidelines;
- launching a call for comments on the first draft of the guidelines which resulted in feedback from over 130 stakeholders from a broad range of sectors generating over 500 responses;
- holding numerous discussions with stakeholders to develop case studies of good practice;
- organising 20 pilot discussions, including nine site visits, with stakeholders involved in a wide range of asbestos exposure situations and activities.

The broad consultation has ensured that the guidelines are based on the latest knowledge, are practical and realistic, and respond to users' expectations and needs.

The process of developing these guidelines was closely followed by representatives of national governments, employers' and workers' organisations belonging to the Working Party on Chemicals of the tripartite Advisory Committee for Safety and Health at Work as well as by the relevant Commission services.

5 Publication and dissemination

This Communication will be published on the EUR-lex website²⁶. The Communication and the accompanying guidelines will also be published and presented on the website of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work and disseminated and promoted through the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee, European social partners (trade unions and employers' representatives) and the Advisory Committee for Safety and Health at Work.

²⁶EUR-lex is the official online portal that provides free access to European Union law.