

# Commission takes further action to better protect workers against cancer-causing chemicals

The Commission proposes to limit workers' exposure to five cancer-causing chemicals, in addition to the 21 substances that have already been limited or proposed to be limited since the beginning of this mandate. Estimates show that today's proposal would improve working conditions for over 1,000,000 EU workers and prevent over 22,000 cases of work-related illness.

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, said: *"Today, the Commission has taken another important step towards fighting work-related cancer and other relevant health problems on the work floor. We propose to limit workers' exposure to five additional cancer-causing chemicals. This will improve protection for over 1 million workers in Europe and help create a healthier and safer workplace, which is a core principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights."*

The Commission proposes to include new exposure limit values for five chemicals in the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive. These limit values set a maximum concentration for the presence of a cancer-causing chemical in the workplace air. The following five carcinogens of high relevance for the protection of workers have been selected:

- Cadmium and its inorganic compounds;
- Beryllium and inorganic beryllium compounds;
- Arsenic acid and its salts, as well as inorganic arsenic compounds;
- Formaldehyde;
- 4,4'-Methylene-bis(2-chloroaniline) (MOCA).

The first three carcinogens listed above are extensively used in sectors as cadmium production and refining, nickel-cadmium battery manufacture, mechanical plating, zinc and copper smelting, foundries, glass, laboratories, electronics, chemicals, construction, healthcare, plastics and recycling.

Putting in place effective measures to prevent high exposures to the five substances and groups of substances under consideration will have a positive impact, even much broader than cancer prevention alone. Introducing these exposure limit values will not only lead to fewer cases of work-related

cancer, but also limit other important health problems caused by carcinogenic and mutagenic substances. For example, exposure to beryllium, in addition to lung cancer, also causes incurable chronic beryllium disease.

European limit values also promote consistency by contributing to a 'level playing field' for all businesses and a clear and common objective for employers, workers and enforcement authorities. The proposal therefore leads to a more efficient system of workers' health protection and improved fairness in the single market.

The proposal is based on scientific evidence and follows broad discussions with relevant stakeholders, in particular employers, workers and Member States' representatives.

## **Background**

This Commission is committed to further strengthening workers' right to a high level of protection of their health and safety at work. The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), which was jointly proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission at the [Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg in November 2017](#), recognises that workers' right to a healthy, safe, and well-adapted work environment is essential to the upward convergence towards better working and living conditions in the EU. Protection of workers' health, by continuously reducing exposures to carcinogenic and mutagenic substances in the workplace, is a concrete action taken by the Juncker Commission to deliver on this priority.

[Data show](#) that cancer is the first cause of work-related deaths. 52% of annual work-related deaths are due to cancer, compared to 24% due to circulatory illnesses and 2% due to injuries. Exposure to certain chemical agents at work can cause cancer. While cancer is a complex disease and certain causal factors are difficult to identify, it is clear that cancers caused by exposure to chemical substances in the workplace can be prevented by reducing or eliminating these exposures.

To ensure that workers are protected against such risks, in 2004, the EU adopted the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive 2004/37/EC (CMD). This Directive sets out steps to be taken to eliminate or limit exposure to carcinogenic and mutagenic chemical agents and, as such, to help prevent occupational cancers and related diseases.

Scientific knowledge about carcinogenic or mutagenic chemicals is constantly evolving and technological progress enables improvements in protection of workers. To ensure that the mechanisms for protecting workers established in the CMD are as effective as possible and that up-to-date preventative measures are in place in all Member States, the Directive needs to be regularly revised. For this reason, the Commission has supported a continuous process of updating the CMD to keep abreast with the new scientific and technical developments, taking account of Social Partners' and Member States' views.

Two previous legislative amendments were proposed by the Commission to the

CMD, in [May 2016](#) and [January 2017](#), together identified limit values to 21 carcinogens. The first amendment was adopted as a [Directive \(EU\) 2017/2398](#) by the co-legislators at the end of 2017. The second proposal for legislative amendments is currently being discussed by legislators. In the EU, around 21 million workers are exposed to at least one of the chemical agents included in the three proposed legislative amendments.

**For more information**

[MEMO: Commission follows up on workers' protection from cancer-causing chemicals: frequently asked questions on the third revision of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive](#)

[News item on DG Employment website](#)

Follow Marianne Thyssen on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

Subscribe to the European Commission's free e-mail [newsletter](#) on employment, social affairs and inclusion

---

## [\*\*Elect a local champion on the 3rd May\*\*](#)

**There is a secret phenomenon in British politics.**

It is occurring in by-elections all over the country, week in, week out, to local authorities from Sunderland to Somerset.

Against the Tories. Against Labour. In Leave areas. In Remain areas.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

---

## [\*\*News story: Scottish quarterly GDP figures show continued growth\*\*](#)

Commenting on the Scottish GDP figures published Wednesday 4 April 2018, Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

It is good news that today's GDP figures show that Scotland's

economy continues to grow. I note a modest improvement in Scotland's important services sector, and encouraging growth in production industries.

However, it is increasingly concerning that a significant gap persists between Scotland's economy and the rest of the UK. The Scottish Government has the powers to boost productivity and strengthen the economy, and must use them to close this gap. By making Scotland the highest taxed part of the UK, the Scottish Government risks damaging, rather than growing, our economy.

Scotland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 0.3% in real terms during the fourth quarter of 2017, following growth of 0.2% in the third quarter of 2017. The equivalent growth rate for the UK as whole during the third quarter was 0.4%.

In the latest quarter, output in the Scottish Services sector grew by 0.5%, output in the Production sector grew by 0.9%, and output in the Construction sector fell by 2.6%.

Compared to the same quarter last year, Scottish GDP has grown by 1.1%. Equivalent UK growth over the year was 1.4%.

In 2017, annual GDP increased by 0.8% compared to 2016, following growth of 0.2% between 2015 and 2016. The equivalent UK growth rate for 2017 was 1.8%.

The full Scottish Government [statistical bulletin](#) is available for download.

---

## **Press release: New building performance standards to save MOD up to 20%**

Infrastructure is a vital defence capability delivering accommodation, training facilities and critical assets such as runways and workshops to enable our armed forces to live, work, train and deploy. Recent DIO projects include building a jetty at Portsmouth Naval Base so the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth can dock, and resurfacing runways at RAF Akrotiri, RAF Gibraltar, and RAF Valley.

The defence estate is large, diverse and widely dispersed across the UK and overseas. In the UK, it covers around 230,000 hectares comprising military training areas, naval bases, barracks, airfields, supply depots, and offices. Construction on these sites is sometimes subject to specific defence requirements but the majority is similar to other sectors, so the new

standards have been developed in accordance with comparators from industry and other government departments. They are designed to be used by MOD staff and industry partners responsible for the planning, costing and delivery of the infrastructure assets and projects funded by MOD.

The new standards, Joint Services Publication (JSP) 315, are expected to save up to 20% on construction costs by creating efficient standards, enabling faster and more cost-effective project development and delivery. They also recognise the success and cost savings DIO has achieved in recent years from increasing the use of modular construction and standardisation of designs, as well as utilising 3D digital and interactive technology.

Graham Dalton, DIO's Chief Executive, said:

The new standards mark a step forward in how DIO enables our military to provide the most effective and efficient solutions and how we work better with the construction industry. The revised standards make it absolutely clear what our requirements are and will contribute to a significant cost and time saving on our infrastructure projects.

The new standards and supporting guidance set a series of reference designs for specific defence infrastructure requirements and benchmark capital and operational costs for the planning and delivery of MOD infrastructure.

The revised JSP 315 can be found [here](#)

---

## **Press release: New building performance standards to save MOD up to 20%**

Infrastructure is a vital defence capability delivering accommodation, training facilities and critical assets such as runways and workshops to enable our armed forces to live, work, train and deploy. Recent DIO projects include building a jetty at Portsmouth Naval Base so the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth can dock, and resurfacing runways at RAF Akrotiri, RAF Gibraltar, and RAF Valley.

The defence estate is large, diverse and widely dispersed across the UK and overseas. In the UK, it covers around 230,000 hectares comprising military training areas, naval bases, barracks, airfields, supply depots, and offices. Construction on these sites is sometimes subject to specific defence requirements but the majority is similar to other sectors, so the new

standards have been developed in accordance with comparators from industry and other government departments. They are designed to be used by MOD staff and industry partners responsible for the planning, costing and delivery of the infrastructure assets and projects funded by MOD.

The new standards, Joint Services Publication (JSP) 315, are expected to save up to 20% on construction costs by creating efficient standards, enabling faster and more cost-effective project development and delivery. They also recognise the success and cost savings DIO has achieved in recent years from increasing the use of modular construction and standardisation of designs, as well as utilising 3D digital and interactive technology.

Graham Dalton, DIO's Chief Executive, said:

The new standards mark a step forward in how DIO enables our military to provide the most effective and efficient solutions and how we work better with the construction industry. The revised standards make it absolutely clear what our requirements are and will contribute to a significant cost and time saving on our infrastructure projects.

The new standards and supporting guidance set a series of reference designs for specific defence infrastructure requirements and benchmark capital and operational costs for the planning and delivery of MOD infrastructure.

The revised JSP 315 can be found [here](#)