

EU Agency for Safety and Health at Work launches Europe-wide awareness-raising campaign on dangerous substances

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) has launched its 2018-19 EU-wide campaign, Healthy Workplaces Manage Dangerous Substances. The launch marks the start of two years of events and activities aimed at drawing attention to the issue and promoting the best ways of tackling the risks that dangerous substances pose to workers.

Our campaign raises awareness of all types of dangerous substances, not just the obvious ones, and emphasises the importance of risk assessment in all sectors as the first step towards prevention.

Contrary to widespread belief, the use of dangerous substances is not decreasing in the EU, and the need to manage the risks they pose is as pressing as ever. Some of the substances that workers are most commonly exposed to include carcinogens. The [European Commission has recently proposed 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.

Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, spoke at a press conference in Brussels to mark the campaign launch: *'We will continue to raise awareness and take action to limit workers' exposure to cancer-causing chemicals. This is a key priority for the European Commission, not least because the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) entitles workers to a high level of protection of their safety and health at work. EU-OSHA's campaigns are leading the way in reaching workplaces across Europe and help organisations adopt effective approaches to occupational safety and health management with the necessary tools.'*

The new campaign aims to promote techniques for the proper management of dangerous substances in the workplace, such as risk assessment, elimination and substitution, by disseminating practical tools and case studies. It also focuses on groups of workers who are at particular risk.

Dr Christa Sedlatschek, EU-OSHA's Director, states that: *'Many workers are unaware that not only manufactured chemical products that are labelled with risk and safety information can cause harm. Other commonly used substances across all sectors – from working with flour in bakeries to silica dust on construction sites – can be hazardous if their use is not managed effectively. Therefore, our campaign raises awareness of all types of*

dangerous substances, not just the obvious ones, and emphasises the importance of risk assessment in all sectors as the first step towards prevention.'

The campaign brings together a wide range of partners, including EU-OSHA's network of national [focal points](#), [official campaign partners](#), [media partners](#) and the [Enterprise Europe Network](#), which help to spread the campaign's messages to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The campaign also has the backing of the European institutions and their networks, in particular the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Lazar Lazarov, Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy, commented, *'The latest Healthy Workplaces Campaign has an important message. While the legislation may be in place, workers and employers across the EU need to be aware of the rules and regulations and how best to comply with them. Otherwise, the risks posed by exposure to dangerous substances will not be managed properly. We look forward to working with EU-OSHA and the campaign partners over the coming years.'*

Ideas and interventions that make an impact at workplace level are shared in particular through the Healthy Workplaces Good Practice Awards. Furthermore, a range of materials have been developed and made available through a multilingual website to support the campaign. An [e-tool](#) to effectively manage dangerous substances in the workplace is available in English and soon will be accessible in three country versions (Austria, Estonia and Romania). Furthermore, a [database](#) has been created of almost 700 practical tools and guidance documents from 11 Member States, and case studies, infographics and [animated short films starring the character Napo](#) can also be found on the [campaign website](#).

In addition, EU-OSHA is a partner of the [Roadmap on Carcinogens](#). This action scheme aims to raise awareness of carcinogens in the workplace and the associated limit values and legislation, and to provide practical information on risk assessment and good practice examples for eliminating or managing risks.

Links: