

ETUC feedback to roadmap

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Initiative: [Europe's Beating Cancer Plan](#)

ETUC response to the consultation of the European Commission on the roadmap of the plan "Europe's Beating Cancer" The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) welcomes the announcement in the European Commission Work Programme for 2020 for a "Europe's Beating Cancer Plan". The approach of the Commission rightly points to the fact that cancer has an impact on the health of individuals and families but also on national health and social systems, governmental budget and the productivity and growth of the economy, including a healthy workforce. The ETUC would like to recall that 8% of all cancer cases are work-related (12% of cancer cases among men and 7% of cancer cases among women). Those percentages are calculated for the general population. For specific occupational groups (building workers, hairdressers, cleaners, etc...) and specific cancer locations (lung cancer, mesothelioma, bladder cancer, etc...), the percentage of work related cancer is much higher. It means that workers prevention with a priority on substitution of carcinogenic agents and processes would strongly reduce the global burden of cancer and would also reduce significantly the health social inequalities in Europe.

Equally, the EU has to rethink its strategies for the prevention of carcinogens that cannot be substituted, like UV-radiation, the reason for the worldwide most spread occupational cancer and of growing concern due to climate change. Occupational cancers could be avoided by eliminating carcinogens or reducing workers' exposure in the production processes. The ETUC acknowledges the improvements in terms of better protection for workers against occupational cancer which have been made during the previous mandate of the European Commission, with the establishment of binding occupational exposure limit values (BOELs) for 25 priority substances. However, with more than 100,000 work-related cancer deaths per year, the European trade union movement believes that much more needs to be done.

There are still 25 other priority substances against which workers should be protected. Some of the limits are still far too high and needs to be lowered as soon as possible (i.e., crystalline silica, asbestos) and the scope of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive (2004/37/EC) should be extended to reprotoxic substances. Also, hazardous medicinal products (including cytostatics) should be included in the annex I of the CMD. The ETUC therefore calls on the Commission to include an occupational health and safety approach in the "Europe's Beating Cancer Plan", which should include a vision for zero work-related cancer.