



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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## Health and Safety: Commission welcomes definitive adoption by Council of measures to protect workers against exposure to hazardous chemicals

The European Commission has welcomed the definitive adoption today by the EU's Council of Ministers of measures to better protect workers from risks linked to exposure to chemicals at the workplace. The new Directive amends five existing EU health and safety Directives on protection of workers from exposure to harmful chemicals to align them with the latest rules on classification, labelling and packaging of chemicals ([Regulation \(EC\) 1272/2008](#)). Member States now have until 1 June 2015 to implement the new Directive in their national legislation.

*"These modifications further strengthen the protection of workers against risks related to the use of dangerous chemicals at work, aligning the EU legislation to highest international standards and ensuring full consistency of health and safety law",* said European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion László Andor. *"The alignment of worker protection requirements with the new labelling system will allow both employers and workers to understand the risks involved in the use of dangerous chemicals so that health and safety is not jeopardized in the workplace".*

Every day millions of EU workers are potentially exposed to hazardous chemicals in a wide range of employment sectors including manufacturing and service industries, agriculture, health care and education.

The new rules will ensure that the requirements of the five Directives, which protect workers when **using** chemicals, are brought in line with the recently introduced new rules for the **supply** of chemicals. Manufacturers and suppliers of chemical substances and mixtures will have to provide harmonised labelling information on hazard classification, alerting the user to the presence of hazardous chemicals, the need to avoid exposure and the associated risks. Employers use this information when carrying out workplace risk assessments. This allows employers to put in place appropriate risk management measures to protect workers' health and safety, such as process enclosure, ventilation systems and the use of personal protective equipment.

The rules will also make a significant positive contribution to a more global approach to the terminology used in the chemical Regulation. This will contribute to improving a common understanding on chemical risk management issues not only in the EU but also with the EU's key trading partners across the world.

To assist employers and workers in managing the practical implications of the new system for chemical packaging and labelling, the Commission has published some guidance materials, available, free of charge, via its [web site](#).

## Background

The classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures regulation, Regulation (EC) 1272/2008, implements the United Nations Globally Harmonised System for the harmonised classification of hazardous chemicals. It foresees the information to users about the related health hazards by means of harmonised communication elements, like pictograms and hazard and precautionary statements on packaging labels, and safety data sheets. It entered into force in January 2009.

The five Occupational Safety and Health Directives amended by the new Directive ([92/58/EEC](#), [92/85/EEC](#), [94/33/EC](#), [98/24/EC](#) and [2004/37/EC](#)) all currently refer to existing EU chemical classification and labelling legislation that will be repealed on 1 June 2015 in accordance with Regulation (EC) 1272/2008.

The new Directive has been the subject of two rounds of consultation of employer and trade union representatives at EU level as well as discussions in the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work (ACSHW).

## For more information

[News item on DG Employment website](#)

László Andor's website: [http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_2010-2014/andor/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/andor/index_en.htm)

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