

Press Information

Fight against Occupational Cancer Conference,
24-25 September 2018

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Every year, 20 000 people in Austria die of cancer. An international study estimates that almost a tenth of these deaths (around 1 800) are attributable to work-related exposure to carcinogens, making them cases of occupational cancer.¹ In Europe, more than 100 000 people a year die of occupational cancer.

These shocking numbers must be reduced in the long term. This is the focus of the international high-level conference on Fighting Occupational Cancer to be held on 24-25 September 2018 in Vienna under the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The conference aims to contribute towards raising awareness about the risks posed by exposure to carcinogenic substances and to discuss measures to combat occupational cancer.

In comparison to the above-mentioned 1 800 deaths due to occupational cancer, in 2017 in Austria a total of 413 people lost their lives as a result of road traffic accidents. This means that in Austria more than four times as many people die of occupational cancer than as a result of road traffic accidents. The goal is thus to reduce the number of cases of occupational cancer in the long term and to prevent the occurrence of new cases.

One of the major challenges for Austria and for the whole of Europe is the fact that people are often not even aware of the risks they may be exposed to in the workplace. Yet, it is only the spread of such knowledge that will allow relevant protective measures to be put in place.

In recent years, the Austrian Labour Inspectorate has focused on combatting exposure to carcinogenic substances. An important factor in the protection of workers is limiting exposure to such substances in the workplace. However, this requires relevant knowledge about the dangers involved and about correct ways of managing carcinogenic substances.

“As the responsible Federal Minister, I am very pleased indeed that as part of a large-scale project the Austrian Labour Inspectorate informs companies, provides them with practical guidance and advises them on the implementation of relevant measures. The preventative work carried out in this regard by the Labour Inspectorate should not be underestimated”, commented Federal Minister Beate Hartinger-Klein.

The Fight against Occupational Cancer Conference is part of a range of activities being carried out at national and European level. These activities range from the specification of new exposure limits for carcinogenic substances to joint campaigns and the sharing of best practices. Bridges are being built linking current research into the potential risks of exposure to carcinogenic materials with the relevant

¹ Study by J Takala “Eliminating occupational cancer in Europe and globally” (2015)

legislation on how such risks are to be managed. It is also important that currently available knowledge is also implemented in the workplace.

An excellent example of an EU-wide initiative is the European Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2018-2019 – Manage Dangerous Substances, which was launched by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) and is being conducted in all member states. Within the framework of the campaign and as a committed partner, Austria is carrying out numerous activities.

The launch of another key initiative was marked by the signing of the “Roadmap on Carcinogens: from Amsterdam to Vienna” in the Netherlands in 2016.

This voluntary action scheme aimed at fighting occupational cancer seeks to raise awareness of the dangers posed by carcinogens in the workplace and encourage the sharing of best practices.

“I am very proud that it has been possible to successfully extend the Roadmap beyond Vienna and into 2019, and to hand it over to Finland in a symbolic act. I regard this handover as a particular highlight of this conference”, explained Federal Minister Beate Hartinger-Klein.



The event meets the Österreichische Umweltzeichen eco-label's criteria for Green Meetings



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