



Reducing Respirable Crystalline Silica at workplaces

The aim of the [NEPSI project](#) (acronym for the European Network for Silica) is to increase the safety of workers in contact with respirable crystalline silica whilst ensuring its use at industrial level. For this purpose, a social dialogue agreement between both parties (employers and employees) replaces the classification of crystalline silica amongst the carcinogen substances at workplaces of a European directive.

Crystalline silica (SiO_2) is an essential component of materials which have an abundance of uses in industry and are vital in many products such as aggregates, bricks, mortar or windows. Although crystalline silica is universal in nature, the inhalation of fine dust containing a proportion of it may constitute a hazard that is limited to the workplace. In particular, the exposure to the silica dust can be controlled, thus improving the working conditions.

A risk assessment procedure is regularly carried out in order to determine the measures and good practices to apply. The application of the Agreement is monitored by biannual reporting from site to European sector level. This procedure of reporting encourages the engaged sectors and companies to regularly monitor the silica dust level and improve their situation compared to the previous years.

NEPSI closely follows the revision of the Carcinogens Directive and the Chemical Agents Directive. Currently, a socio-economic study and an impact assessment are being prepared which will help the European decision maker to classify crystalline silica. In the meantime, NEPSI Social Agreement and Good Practices show a good example of "self-regulation" of the concerned sectors.

18 EU manufacturing sectors cooperate for the strong implementation of the agreement and advocate at the European Commission to recognise the success of the agreement and as a valid option to future regulations or labelling.

In the framework of NEPSI, a new, dynamic dialogue has started within the construction sector (including the whole value chain) which aims at working together and ensuring better, healthier workplaces ahead of the results of the mentioned studies carried out on behalf of the European Commission.

