

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – EU strategic framework on health and safety at work 2021 2027 – Occupational safety and health in a changing world of work

(COM(2021) 323 final)

(2022/C 105/18)

Rapporteur: **Carlos Manuel TRINDADE**

Referral	Commission, 10.8.2021
Legal basis	Article 153(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
Section responsible	Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship
Adopted in section	6.10.2021
Adopted at plenary	20.10.2021
Plenary session No	564
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	153/25/41

1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1 The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) believes that protecting workers against health and safety hazards on the job (OSH) is fundamental to ensuring sustained decent working conditions, is enshrined in the Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, is a right reflected in principle 10 of the European Pillar of Social Rights and is fundamental for reaching the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals ⁽¹⁾.

1.2 The EESC fully endorses the Commission's statement that 'healthy and safe working conditions are a prerequisite for a healthy and productive workforce. No one should suffer from work-related illness or accidents. It is also an important aspect of both the sustainability and competitiveness of the EU economy' ⁽²⁾. The EESC also agrees that 'good OSH also reduces healthcare costs and other societal burdens, in contrast, the costs of poor OSH are high for individuals, businesses and society' ⁽³⁾.

1.3 The EESC broadly agrees with the strategic vision and measures set out in the strategic framework (notwithstanding the comments, proposals and recommendations made below in this opinion), specifically:

1.3.1 The Committee notes, in particular, the Commission's statement that it 'will put forward an initiative to improve the working conditions of people working through digital platforms at the end of 2021 ... to ensure adequate working conditions, including in terms of health and safety ...', where the social partners are not willing to negotiate with each other ⁽⁴⁾.

1.3.2 The EESC supports the (i) the 'Vision Zero' approach to work-related deaths; (ii) the cancer measures provided for; (iii) ratification of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention 2019 (No 190); (iv) proposing a legislative initiative on preventing and combating gender-based violence against women and domestic violence before the end of 2021; and (v) the Commission's objective to integrate psychosocial and ergonomic risks into the Healthy Workplaces Campaign.

⁽¹⁾ Communication from the Commission (COM(2021) 323 final).

⁽²⁾ Ibid.

⁽³⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid.

1.3.3 The EESC broadly agrees, in particular: (i) that 'it is ... essential to draw the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic and increase preparedness for potential future health crises' by developing 'synergies between OSH and public health'; and (ii) with the inclusion of COVID-19 in the Recommendation concerning the European schedule of occupational diseases ⁽⁵⁾.

1.3.4 The EESC broadly endorses, in particular: (i) the need for Member States to take initiatives to 'address the downward trend in the number of labour inspections'; (ii) the holding of a 2023 stocktaking OSH summit, focusing especially on the progress achieved on the 'Vision Zero' approach to work-related deaths; (iii) a new indicator on fatal accidents at work, already proposed in the European Pillar of Social Rights action plan; (iv) improving the work of labour inspectors with EU-level and national guidance and training; (v) promoting cooperation at EU and Member State level to ensure consistent enforcement of legislation; (vi) supporting tools and guidance for businesses, in particular micro and small enterprises, to comply with OSH legislation ⁽⁶⁾.

1.3.5 The EESC broadly supports, in particular: (i) cooperation between the EU, the ILO and the WHO on data and knowledge; (ii) the fact that the EU, together with Member States, will support the creation of a new indicator on mortality from diseases attributed to occupational risk factors (as part of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals); (iii) the fact that the EU will support the integration of the right to safe and healthy working conditions into the ILO framework of fundamental principles and rights at work; (iv) the EU's intention to foster OSH in global supply chains; (v) the EU's intention to ensure that OSH standards are properly taken into account as part of binding commitments on labour and social standards and to promote the broader issue of decent work in future EU trade agreements; (vi) support for candidate countries to align their legal frameworks with the EU *acquis* on OSH ⁽⁷⁾.

1.4 In particular, the EESC proposes to the Commission that the following actions, measures or initiatives be integrated into the EU strategic framework 2021–2027:

1.4.1 Section 2.1: (i) with regard to people qualified as self-employed, to whom under the strategic framework the OSH rules do not apply, the EESC recommends that a study be carried out in useful time involving the Commission, experts and the social partners, to find the best solution with due regard for the principle that all self-employed must also have a safe and healthy working environment, and that the conclusions of the study be presented at the OSH summit in 2023; (ii) with regard to the non-legislative initiative on mental health at work which the Commission plans to launch at EU level, the EESC proposes, precisely because of the relevance of the grounds set out in the strategic framework, opting for a legislative initiative;

1.4.2 Section 2.2: (i) calls on the Commission to include work-related cancer in the future European Beating Cancer Plan and extend the scope of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive to reprotoxins and hazardous medicinal products, ensuring long-term monitoring of the health of workers exposed to carcinogens, even where they are no longer working under those conditions; (ii) recommends that the Commission's intention to assess 'how to strengthen the effectiveness of the Employers Sanctions Directive' (2009/52/EC) result in the directive being revised to make the penalties laid down for employers who contravene it more severe; (iii) proposes that, as the lessons learned from the recent COVID-19 crisis have shown, a legislative initiative is urgently needed on preventing psychosocial risks; (iv) the experience gained and research on musculoskeletal disorders are evidence of the need for a legislative initiative on this subject;

1.4.3 Section 2.3: the EESC recommends (i) that the Recommendation concerning the European schedule of occupational diseases be turned into a directive; (ii) that the Biological Agents Directive be improved to incorporate recent experiences; (iii) with regard to national labour inspections, that a target be set of Member States complying with the ratio laid down in the ILO standards of one labour inspector for 10 000 workers by the end of the strategic framework. If this target is not met during the period covered by this strategic framework, the Commission will issue a legislative initiative with this objective;

1.4.4 Chapter 3: the EESC recommends that the European Labour Authority (ELA)'s inspection activity be properly integrated and promoted within the strategic framework, given the important role it plays in coordinating cross-border inspections.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁶⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁷⁾ Ibid.

1.5 The EESC notes that, despite some improvements in recent years, there is still a substantial lack of information and knowledge of OSH situations in the EU and the Member States. The EESC firmly believes that this knowledge is indispensable in order to better identify challenges and prevent risks, define appropriate policies and monitor implementation and progress made at EU level and in individual Member States, in particular with regard to the objectives and measures stemming from the OSH strategic framework for 2021–2027.

1.6 The EESC stresses that in the process of revising existing OSH legislation at EU and Member State level, it is necessary to take into account the ecological, digital, demographic and social transformations of the European economy, and particular in the world of work, in order to protect workers or self-employed persons, in this case in compliance with point 1.4.1(i).

1.7 Member States have a particular responsibility to enforce OSH legislation and ensure healthy and safe working conditions for all European workers, in particular seasonal workers and the most vulnerable groups such as young people, elderly people, women, people with disabilities, migrants and precarious workers. Building up the technical and human resources of labour inspectorates, which have been declining in recent years in many Member States, and greater coordination, cooperation and training at European level, are essential if significant improvements are to be achieved in enforcing OSH legislation. Guidance and support for SMEs, particularly microenterprises, to comply with OSH legislation should also be a priority for the various Member States. The Commission, as guardian of the Treaties, is responsible for ensuring that Member States comply properly with OSH legislation.

1.8 The EESC recommends that, when updating national OSH strategies, the Commission and the Member States take initiatives to promote ongoing social dialogue between the social partners on OSH conditions in sectors, businesses and workplaces. Involving trade unions and workers' representatives and consulting them continuously on risk assessment and prevention are key to promoting safe and healthy working environments, and will have a direct impact on workers' health, business productivity and public health services.

1.9 In view of the challenges of globalisation and the European aim to 'raise OSH standards globally', the EESC recommends that the Commission and the Member States work together closely with the ILO and the WHO to promote the right to safe and healthy working conditions within the framework of ILO core labour principles and rights and in safeguarding respect for these principles by global supply chains.

2. General background

2.1 The EESC notes that 'for close to 20 years now, EU OSH strategic frameworks have played a pivotal role in the way national authorities and social partners decide on OSH objectives' ⁽⁸⁾. However, the EESC stresses that while the importance of these strategic frameworks in the national plans is undeniable, they lack visibility, and trade unions and employers' organisations have not been sufficiently involved in drawing them up and following up on them in several Member States.

2.2 The EESC takes note of the stocktaking exercise concerning the EU OSH strategic framework 2014–2020, in particular as regards the identification of important aspects such as: (i) resource constraints in Member States; (ii) the need to increase focus on occupational diseases, demographic change, psychosocial risks and musculoskeletal disorders; and (iii) the need to help both labour inspectorates and companies improve their OSH standards ⁽⁹⁾.

2.3 The EESC notes that European legislation has reduced these risks and has helped to improve OSH standards in all Member States and across all sectors of economic activity. However, challenges remain and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated risks that need to be addressed.

2.4 The EESC acknowledges the significant progress made in OSH in the EU in recent years: fatal accidents at work in the EU decreased by about 70 % between 1994 and 2018. While de-industrialisation and better medical care have contributed to this decrease, it is also true that the EU OSH system has played a substantial role ⁽¹⁰⁾.

⁽⁸⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁹⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Communication from the Commission (COM(2021) 323 final).

2.5 The EESC notes that, despite this progress, there were still over 3 300 fatal accidents and 3,1 million non-fatal accidents in the EU-27 in 2018 and over 200 000 workers die each year from work-related illnesses. This brings immense human suffering. Maintaining and improving protection standards for workers is therefore an ongoing challenge and necessity⁽¹¹⁾.

2.6 The EESC underscores that work-related accidents and illnesses cost the EU economy over 3,3 % of GDP annually (around EUR 460 billion in 2019) and that estimates show that for every euro invested in OSH, the return for the employer is around twice as much⁽¹²⁾.

2.7 The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how crucial OSH is for protecting workers' health, for the functioning of our society, and for the continuity of critical economic and social activities. The EESC agrees that the pandemic has also highlighted the need for a strategy coordinating OSH and public health policies, creating synergies between the two dimensions that have a direct impact on 'the functioning of our society' and on 'the continuity of critical economic and social activities'⁽¹³⁾.

3. The EU strategic framework on health and safety at work 2021–2027

3.1 It is against this general backdrop that the Commission presents the new 2021–2027 EU OSH strategic framework⁽¹⁴⁾ (hereafter referred to as the 'strategic framework'), announced in the European Pillar of Social Rights, which focuses on the following three key objectives:

- anticipating and managing **change** in the new world of work brought about by the green, digital and demographic transitions,
- improving **prevention** of workplace accidents and illnesses,
- increasing **preparedness** for any potential future health crises.

3.2 The EESC agrees with the European Commission that delivering on these goals requires:

- (i) robust social dialogue;
- (ii) greater research and data collection capacity at Member State and EU level;
- (iii) strengthening of enforcement;
- (iv) awareness raising;
- (v) more funding.

3.3 The EESC notes that the strategic framework provides for the implementation of 36 measures during the period in question, with 17 being the direct responsibility of the Commission, 16 of the Member States and 3 of the social partners.

4. Comments on the strategic framework

4.1 Section 2.1: Anticipating and managing change

4.1.1 In the context of the green and digital transitions, the nature of roles, work patterns and workplaces is changing, giving rise to substantial challenges for Member States and businesses when it comes to ensuring workers' health and wellbeing.

4.1.2 As workers are getting older it is necessary to adapt the working environment and tasks to their specific needs and minimise risks, with OSH playing an essential role in responding adequately to demographic change.

⁽¹¹⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹²⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹³⁾ Communication from the Commission (COM(2021) 323 final).

⁽¹⁴⁾ Ibid.

4.1.3 Digital technologies can provide workers, including workers with disabilities or older workers, with increased opportunities to improve work-life balance, for both women and men. They also support OSH implementation through accessible tools, awareness raising and more efficient inspection.

4.1.4 The EESC believes that robotisation and the use of artificial intelligence reduce the risks of dangerous tasks, such as those in highly contaminated areas like wastewater systems, landfills, or agricultural-fumigation areas; they can also provide new opportunities for workers and businesses. However, new technologies also pose a number of challenges due to both the increased irregularity in when and where work is performed, the possibility of overseeing workers, and the risks related to new tools and machinery. These challenges increase mental stress, leading to an increasing number of psychosomatic diseases, for which appropriate measures need to be found.

4.1.5 While EU OSH legislation already covers many of the risks that arise from changing industries, equipment, and workplaces, the EESC agrees with the Commission that technological developments, an ageing workforce and changing forms of work require further legislative proposals.

4.1.6 In this context, the EESC recommends that the Commission revise the OSH Framework Directive itself in order to adapt it to work situations and to the new risks and challenges of climate change (such as working at high temperatures outdoors), demographic change and digitalisation.

4.1.7 The EESC believes that psychosocial risks, which were already very high before the pandemic, have increased significantly as a result of COVID-19 and the unplanned, wholesale introduction of non-voluntary remote working and the particular conditions accompanying it, such as the disappearance of the boundary between work and private life, permanent connectivity, lack of social interaction and greater use of ICT.

4.2 Point 2.2: *Improving prevention of work-related diseases and accidents*

4.2.1 The EESC endorses the Commission's vision — 'a "Vision Zero" approach to work-related deaths and strengthening prevention culture in the EU. This will only be possible by: (i) thorough investigation of accidents and deaths at the workplace; (ii) identifying and addressing the causes of these accidents and deaths; (iii) increasing awareness of the risks related to work-related accidents, injuries and occupational diseases; and (iv) strengthening enforcement of existing rules and guidelines'.

4.2.2 The EESC considers to be unacceptable the estimated 100 000 occupational cancer deaths in the workplace and calls on the Member States to swiftly implement the strategy in the roadmap on carcinogens and to apply the limit values and other provisions adopted at EU level, limiting exposure to 26 hazardous substances and therefore improving working conditions for around 40 million workers. The EESC believes that the list of hazardous substances should be reviewed and supplemented, in particular to include nanomaterials and their carcinogenic effects, and recommends that the list of carcinogens subject to exposure limits be increased to 50.

4.2.3 The EESC calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote health at work and to prioritise strengthening research and data collection, at both EU and national level. These actions should cover in particular occupational circulatory diseases, musculoskeletal disorders and psychosocial risks.

4.2.4 The EESC supports the proposal to continuously update the methodology for addressing hazardous substances and to identify further efficiencies in establishing OSH limit values. The EESC underscores and supports the process of addressing hazardous substances on the basis of scientific assessment, in line with the 'one substance, one assessment' principle. It considers that consultation with the tripartite ACSH, and the close involvement of all stakeholders have proven to be successful.

4.2.5 With regard to the European Parliament and stakeholders' stances on the need to protect healthcare staff exposed to hazardous medicinal products as well as other risks, the EESC takes the view that not just further training, instruction and guidance but also binding legislation are needed to further address this issue.

4.2.6 The EESC believes that recognising diversity, including gender differences and inequalities, and fighting discrimination in the workforce, are vital in ensuring the safety and health of workers, including when assessing risk at work, and that actions to avoid gender bias should be encouraged. In any case, it should be borne in mind that the ability to work can be affected by a biological condition (such as breastfeeding or pregnancy).

4.2.7 The labour market outcomes of persons with disabilities should be improved, including with regard to the practical implementation of OSH and vocational rehabilitation schemes for people suffering from chronic diseases or people who have been the victims of accidents.

4.2.8 Protection of particularly vulnerable groups of workers needs to be improved. In this context, all Member States should focus especially on labour inspections and ratifying the 2019 Violence and Harassment Convention. The EESC calls on all Member States to ratify this Convention during the period covered by the strategy.

4.3 Point 2.3: Increasing preparedness — responding rapidly to threats

4.3.1 The COVID-19 crisis has revealed the crucial role of OSH in helping workers, businesses and governments to protect lives and manage wellbeing risks, business continuity and sustainability.

4.3.2 One of the lessons to be learned for the future, which ensured effective responses during the crisis, is the importance of synergies between OSH and public health. This interaction needs to be stepped up in all Member States so that the EU can be prepared to face future health crises.

4.3.3 The EESC acknowledges the importance of the work carried out by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) in developing a series of guidance tools in collaboration with Member States and social partners, which allowed businesses, particularly SMEs, to respond adequately through the different stages of the pandemic.

4.3.4 The classification of the SARS-CoV-2 virus under the Biological Agents Directive helped to ensure the protection of workers in facilities in which the virus is being handled directly in order to produce, distribute or administer vaccines.

4.3.5 The pandemic also highlighted that mobile and cross-border workers, including seasonal, migrant and precarious workers, can be more exposed to unhealthy or unsafe living and working conditions, such as poor or overcrowded accommodation or lack of information on their rights. The EESC calls on the Member States to fulfil their OSH obligations and to raise awareness of the need to promote fair and safe working and living conditions for seasonal, mobile and cross-border workers.

4.3.6 The EESC notes the importance, stressed by the Commission, to support workers infected by COVID-19 and families who have lost family members because of work exposure to SARS-CoV-2 and the fact that 25 Member States have already taken step in that direction, including by recognition of COVID-19 as an occupational disease⁽¹⁵⁾.

4.4 Chapter 3: Implementing the updated strategic framework

4.4.1 The EESC endorses the Commission's statement that 'social partners are particularly well placed to find solutions adapted to the circumstances of a specific activity or sector'⁽¹⁶⁾.

4.4.2 The EESC points out that the pandemic has shown that businesses and workplaces are also major centres for spreading contagion, making OSH measures tailored to each specific economic unit more important.

4.4.3 The EESC recommends that, on this matter, the Commission take initiatives to promote ongoing social dialogue between the social partners on OSH conditions in sectors of activity and, in particular, in businesses. Involving trade unions and workers' representatives and consulting them continuously on the situation, closely coordinated with collective bargaining, assessing, preventing and managing risks, leveraging opportunities and creating safe and healthy working environments, have a direct impact on workers' health, on the productivity and competitiveness of businesses and on society itself, especially in public health services.

4.4.4 The EESC agrees with the Commission that only accurate and timely knowledge of the OSH situation, at both EU and Member State level, allows challenges to be identified and risks prevented, appropriate policies to be defined, their enforcement to be monitored and their results analysed. Knowledge of scientific and technological innovations and continuously incorporating them into policy decisions also allows them to evolve constantly.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Ibid.

4.4.5 The EESC endorses the need for up-to-date, appropriate OSH databases at EU and Member State level, with new social indicators, allowing research and reporting, reviews and studies on all dimensions of OSH⁽¹⁷⁾.

4.4.6 The EESC notes that ‘the success of this strategic framework depends largely on its implementation at national and local level’⁽¹⁸⁾. This awareness gives Member States greater responsibility to comply with and enforce legislation and to promote and remove obstacles to social dialogue between the social partners, as one of the basic conditions for the success of the strategic framework is the intervention of labour inspectorates at Member State level, the action of occupational medical technicians and doctors, and the involvement of trade unions and OSH workers’ representatives.

4.4.7 In order for the objectives of the strategic framework to be successful, the EESC stresses that companies have overall responsibility for OSH conditions, whether the worker is in the workplace or working remotely. However, this poses a challenge when the worker is working from home or another place where the employer may not have control or access.

4.4.8 The EESC shares the view that increasing awareness of risks related to work-related accidents, injuries and occupational diseases is key to achieving the objectives of the strategic framework, with a focus on the ‘Vision Zero’ on deaths from work-related accidents. The EESC believes that awareness raising is indeed one of the key measures for implementing legislation, but that it is the existence of this legislation and, subsequently, participation and monitoring, which are the key to success overall. The EESC firmly believes that focusing on prevention and compliance with the OSH Directives is essential for achieving the objectives of the strategy.

4.4.9 The EESC believes that this awareness raising depends to a large extent on actively involving the social partners and all stakeholders. It is in this context that the EESC values the role of the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work and recommends that the Commission promote it better.

4.4.10 The EESC believes that, while all stakeholders — Member States, companies, labour inspectorates and workers — agree on the need to achieve these objectives, the degree of responsibility varies, with workers being the most vulnerable and least able, which means they should therefore be given the greatest protection.

4.4.11 For this reason, the EESC believes that workers should be able, when they find that there is a danger of accident or serious illness at their workplace, particularly a fatal risk, to refuse to work and, ultimately, to have the right to terminate their contract with compensation if their lives are placed in danger because the OSH rules are not complied with by the company.

4.4.12 The EESC notes that there are a total of 11 European funds and financial mechanisms that have the capacity to finance actions in the various OSH areas⁽¹⁹⁾. The EESC underlines that financial support for implementing OSH actions is one of the key measures for the success of the strategic framework itself. The EESC recommends that the Commission provide more detailed information to the Member States and, in particular, to the social partners, to make it easier for them to access OSH projects and facilitate the implementation of these projects.

4.5 Chapter 4: Promoting effective OSH standards worldwide

4.5.1 The EESC endorses the statement ‘in a globalised world, health and safety threats do not stop at borders’ and the aim of the strategic framework: ‘to raise OSH standards globally’⁽²⁰⁾.

4.5.2 The EESC also supports the Commission’s intention to engage with the ILO to implement and follow up the 2019 Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, supporting the integration of the right to safe and healthy working conditions into the ILO framework of fundamental principles and rights at work.

Brussels, 20 October 2021

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Christa SCHWENG

⁽¹⁷⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Ibid.

⁽²⁰⁾ Ibid.

ANNEX

The following amendments, which received at least a quarter of the votes cast, were rejected during the discussions (Rule 43 (2) of the Rules of Procedure):

AMENDMENT 1**Tabled by:**

LE BRETON Marie-Pierre

MINCHEVA Mariya

PILAWSKI Lech

VADÁSZ Borbála

VERNICOS George

SOC/698 — Health and safety at work — EU Strategic Framework (2021–2027)**Point 4.1.5**

Amend as follows:

Section opinion	Amendment
While EU OSH legislation already covers many of the risks that arise from changing industries, equipment, and workplaces, the EESC agrees with the Commission that technological developments, an ageing workforce and changing forms of work require further legislative proposals.	While EU OSH legislation already covers many of the risks that arise from changing industries, equipment, and workplaces, the EESC agrees with the Commission that technological developments, an ageing workforce and changing forms of work might require further legislative proposals.

Outcome of the vote:

In favour: 70

Against: 118

Abstention: 11

AMENDMENT 2**Tabled by:**

LE BRETON Marie-Pierre

MINCHEVA Mariya

PILAWSKI Lech

VADÁSZ Borbála

VERNICOS George

SOC/698 — Health and safety at work — EU Strategic Framework (2021–2027)

Point 4.1.6

Amend as follows:

Section opinion	Amendment
In this context, the EESC recommends that the Commission revise the OSH Framework Directive itself in order to adapt it to work situations and to the new risks and challenges of climate change (such as working at high temperatures outdoors), demographic change and digitalisation.	In this context, the EESC recommends that the Commission continues to closely monitor the implementation of the OSH Framework Directive and revise it if necessary , in order to ensure it covers also the new risks and challenges of climate change (such as working at high temperatures outdoors), demographic change and digitalisation.

Outcome of the vote:

In favour: 68

Against: 124

Abstention: 12

AMENDMENT 3

Tabled by:

LE BRETON Marie-Pierre

MINCHEVA Mariya

PILAWSKI Lech

VADÁSZ Borbála

VERNICOS George

SOC/698 — Health and safety at work — EU Strategic Framework (2021–2027)

Point 4.2.2

Amend as follows:

Section opinion	Amendment
The EESC considers to be unacceptable the estimated 100 000 occupational cancer deaths in the workplace and calls on the Member States to swiftly implement the strategy in the roadmap on carcinogens and to apply the limit values and other provisions adopted at EU level, limiting exposure to 26 hazardous substances and therefore improving working conditions for around 40 million workers. The EESC believes that the list of hazardous substances should be reviewed and supplemented, in particular to include nanomaterials and their carcinogenic effects, and recommends that the list of carcinogens subject to exposure limits be increased to 50 .	The EESC considers to be unacceptable the estimated 100 000 occupational cancer deaths in the workplace and calls on the Member States to swiftly implement the strategy in the roadmap on carcinogens and to apply the limit values and other provisions adopted at EU level, limiting exposure to 26 hazardous substances and therefore improving working conditions for around 40 million workers. The EESC believes that the list of hazardous substances should be reviewed and supplemented, in particular to include specific nanomaterials with proven carcinogenic effects, and recommends maximum efforts to extend the list of carcinogens subject to exposure limits.

Outcome of the vote:

In favour: 68

Against: 135

Abstention: 6

AMENDMENT 4**Tabled by:**

LE BRETON Marie-Pierre

MINCHEVA Mariya

PILAWSKI Lech

VADÁSZ Borbála

VERNICOS George

SOC/698 — Health and safety at work — EU Strategic Framework (2021–2027)**Point 4.2.5**

Amend as follows:

Section opinion	Amendment
With regard to the European Parliament and stakeholders' stances on the need to protect healthcare staff exposed to hazardous medicinal products as well as other risks, the EESC takes the view that not just further training, instruction and guidance but also binding legislation are needed to further address this issue.	With regard to the European Parliament and stakeholders' stances on the need to protect healthcare staff exposed to hazardous medicinal products as well as other risks, the EESC takes the view that not just further training, instruction and guidance but also efficient implementation of the existing legislation is needed to further address this issue.

Outcome of the vote:

In favour: 71

Against: 133

Abstention: 9

AMENDMENT 5**Tabled by:**

LE BRETON Marie-Pierre

MINCHEVA Mariya

PILAWSKI Lech

VADÁSZ Borbála

VERNICOS George

SOC/698 — Health and safety at work — EU Strategic Framework (2021–2027)

Point 4.3.5

Amend as follows:

Section opinion	Amendment
The pandemic also highlighted that mobile and cross-border workers, including seasonal, migrant and precarious workers, can be more exposed to unhealthy or unsafe living and working conditions, such as poor or overcrowded accommodation or lack of information on their rights. The EESC calls on the Member States to fulfil their OSH obligations and to raise awareness of the need to promote fair and safe working and living conditions for seasonal, mobile and cross-border workers.	The pandemic also highlighted that mobile and cross-border workers, including seasonal and migrant workers in insecure employment could be more exposed to unhealthy or unsafe living and working conditions, such as poor or overcrowded accommodation or lack of information on their rights. The EESC calls on the Member States to fulfil their OSH obligations and to raise awareness of the need to promote fair and safe working and living conditions for seasonal, mobile and cross-border workers.

Outcome of the vote:

In favour: 72

Against: 125

Abstention: 11

AMENDMENT 6

Tabled by:

LE BRETON Marie-Pierre

MINCHEVA Mariya

PILAWSKI Lech

VADÁSZ Borbála

VERNICOS George

SOC/698 — Health and safety at work — EU Strategic Framework (2021–2027)

Point 4.4.11

Delete point:

Section opinion	Amendment
<i>For this reason, the EESC believes that workers should be able, when they find that there is a danger of accident or serious illness at their workplace, particularly a fatal risk, to refuse to work and, ultimately, to have the right to terminate their contract with compensation if their lives are placed in danger because the OSH rules are not complied with by the company.</i>	

Outcome of the vote:

In favour: 69

Against: 135

Abstention: 8

AMENDMENT 7**Tabled by:**

LE BRETON Marie-Pierre

MINCHEVA Mariya

PILAWSKI Lech

VADÁSZ Borbála

VERNICOS George

SOC/698 — Health and safety at work — EU Strategic Framework (2021–2027)**Point 1.4.1**

Amend as follows:

Section opinion	Amendment
Section 2.1: (i) with regard to people qualified as self-employed, to whom under the strategic framework the OSH rules do not apply, the EESC recommends that a study be carried out in useful time involving the Commission, experts and the social partners, to find the best solution with due regard for the principle that all self-employed must also have a safe and healthy working environment, and that the conclusions of the study be presented at the OSH summit in 2023; (ii) with regard to the non-legislative initiative on mental health at work which the Commission plans to launch at EU level, the EESC proposes, precisely because of the relevance of the grounds set out in the strategic framework, opting for a legislative initiative;	Section 2.1: (i) with regard to people qualified as self-employed, to whom under the strategic framework the OSH rules do not apply, the EESC recommends that a study be carried out in useful time involving the Commission, experts and the social partners, to find the best solution with due regard for the principle that all self-employed must also have a safe and healthy working environment, and that the conclusions of the study be presented at the OSH summit in 2023; (ii) with regard to the non-legislative initiative on mental health at work which the Commission plans to launch at EU level, the EESC welcomes the approach adopted by the Commission;

Outcome of the vote:

In favour: 66

Against: 135

Abstention: 8

AMENDMENT 8**Tabled by:**

LE BRETON Marie-Pierre

MINCHEVA Mariya

PILAWSKI Lech

VADÁSZ Borbála

VERNICOS George

SOC/698 — Health and safety at work — EU Strategic Framework (2021–2027)

Point 1.4.2

Amend as follows:

Section opinion	Amendment
<p>Section 2.2: (i) calls on the Commission to include work-related cancer in the future European Beating Cancer Plan and extend the scope of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive to reprotoxins and hazardous medicinal products, ensuring long-term monitoring of the health of workers exposed to carcinogens, even where they are no longer working under those conditions; (ii) recommends that the Commission's intention to assess 'how to strengthen the effectiveness of the Employers Sanctions Directive' (2009/52/EC) result in the directive being revised to make the penalties laid down for employers who contravene it more severe; (iii) proposes that, as the lessons learned from the recent COVID-19 crisis have shown, a legislative initiative is urgently needed on preventing psychosocial risks; (iv) the experience gained and research on musculoskeletal disorders are evidence of the need for a legislative initiative on this subject;</p>	<p>Section 2.2: (i) supports the proposal in the OSH Strategic Framework to identify a priority list of reprotoxicants to be addressed, based on the opinion agreed in the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health to set a list of priority substances for an OEL and calls on the Commission to include work-related cancer in the future European Beating Cancer Plan, (ii) recommends that the Commission's intention to assess 'how to strengthen the effectiveness of the Employers Sanctions Directive' (2009/52/EC) result in efficient implementation and enforcement; (iii) agrees with the approach of the Commission to prepare, in cooperation with Member States and social partners, a non-legislative EU-level initiative related to mental health at work that assesses emerging issues related to workers' mental health; (iv) supports the aim of the Commission to make psychosocial and ergonomic risks part of the healthy workplaces campaign;</p>

Outcome of the vote:

In favour: 70

Against: 140

Abstention: 7

AMENDMENT 9

Tabled by:

LE BRETON Marie-Pierre

MINCHEVA Mariya

PILAWSKI Lech

VADÁSZ Borbála

VERNICOS George

SOC/698 — Health and safety at work — EU Strategic Framework (2021–2027)

Point 1.4.3

Amend as follows:

Section opinion	Amendment
<p>Section 2.3: the EESC <i>recommends</i> (i) that the Recommendation concerning the European schedule of occupational diseases be turned into a directive; (ii) that the Biological Agents Directive be improved to incorporate recent experiences; (iii) with regard to national labour inspections, that a target be set of Member States complying with the ratio laid down in the ILO standards of one labour inspector for 10 000 workers by the end of the strategic framework. If this target is not met during the period covered by this strategic framework, the Commission will issue a legislative initiative with this objective;</p>	<p>Section 2.3: the EESC <i>notes</i> (i) that appropriate follow-up should be given in the Members States to the Recommendation concerning the European schedule of occupational diseases; (ii) that the Biological Agents Directive was improved to incorporate recent experiences.</p>

Outcome of the vote:

In favour: 70

Against: 133

Abstention: 7