

**Question for written answer E-011640/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: EU measures to tackle the consequences of asbestos use

Asbestos is a commonly used material in manufacturing. However, since the late 20th century, a series of regulatory limitations has been put upon its use (at least in advanced countries) due to the serious illnesses that asbestos exposure can cause. The direct link between asbestos-related illness and the use of this mineral was only discovered rather recently, considering that it was used in ancient Rome and Greece because of its regional abundance and its properties. In fact, asbestos is strongly resistant to corrosion, tensile stress, and wear; it is chemically and physically stable, provides sound insulation and particularly thermal insulation, and is heat-resistant. These qualities led to the widespread use of asbestos in construction, especially during the post-World War II economic boom, for example in gyms, schools, piping, heating and air conditioning systems, fire retardant clothing, buses, trains and brake systems.

Given the widespread use of asbestos in many different manufacturing activities over the past decades, the populations of all countries can be considered to have been potentially exposed and consequently susceptible to contracting asbestos-related diseases, including malignant mesothelioma, which is characterized by a long latency period and a very high mortality rate.

Does the Commission consider it appropriate to prepare an action plan coordinated at EU level to effectively deal with problems arising from the long-term use of asbestos?

Since the asbestos problem has repercussions in the areas of health, the environment and the economy, what are the Commission's priority action areas?