

**Question for written answer E-003313/2022
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Lack of a uniform European limit value system for gases in import containers

Containers in international freight transport often contain chemicals and gases, such as toluene, benzene and phosphine. Exposure to excessive concentrations of such gases when opening and entering these containers can pose health risks to workers. Despite existing European thresholds, countries in Europe apply their own limits for the use of gases in import containers. To give you an example, for the use of the carcinogenic substance benzene, the Netherlands applies a working limit of 0.22 ppm, while Belgium and France allow a value of 1.0 ppm.¹ Such differences lead to unnecessary complexity for SMEs in particular and an unequal level of protection of workers in Europe. They also encourage a shift of goods flows to countries with less or no enforcement and less stringent safety requirements.

1. Can the Commission provide insight into the financial and societal impact of the lack of uniform rules for the safe unloading of import containers in Europe?
2. Does the Commission share the view that the current patchwork of national limit values for gases in import containers creates unnecessary barriers to the free movement of goods in Europe and for SMEs operating across borders?
3. Is the Commission prepared to adopt measures that establish a single European limit system for gases in import containers in order to streamline limit values in European countries and ensure effective enforcement?

¹ <https://www.ser.nl/nl/thema/arbeidsomstandigheden/Grenswaarden-gevaarlijke-stoffen/Grenswaarden/Benzeen>