



EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF DERMATOLOGY AND VENEREOLOGY
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Statement by the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV) concerning the European Commission's recent publication on "Better Regulation"

The European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV) expresses its concern vis-à-vis a recent publication of the European Commission entitled "Better Regulation and Transparency", dated 30 October 2015¹. In this publication, the Commission declares that it "must not be big on small things" (page 3) by portraying an image of a hairdresser cutting hair and a pair of high-heeled shoes. The crossed over image clearly refers to the European Framework Agreement on the protection of occupational health and safety in the hairdressing sector signed by the sectoral social partners in Brussels on 26 April 2012, under the presence of the then Commissioner of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion Laszlo Andor, which has been fully supported by the EADV. This agreement is considered a landmark in bringing forward health and safety in an industrial sector, which is characterized by small- and medium-sized enterprises with some 400,000 salons employing over 1.5 million workers, which amounts to approx. 10 per cent of the total service sector in Europe. WHO and ILO, both represented at the signatory event, regarded it a major European breakthrough in safety and health because it is an autonomous initiative on the part of the workers and employers of the hairdressing sector.

Health and safety in this sector cannot be considered a "small thing" taking into consideration that hairdressing is one of the most affected high risk professions by occupational skin diseases. According to the European Risk Observatory report on Occupational Skin Diseases (OSD) and dermal exposure (2009) "skin diseases are the second most common work related health problem in Europe". In certain countries, such as Germany and Denmark, skin diseases are at the head of all recognized occupational diseases, accounting for up to 35 per cent of all work-related illnesses. In the 15-25 year old age group, they account for 90 per cent of all work related health problems. In the European Union alone, costs of OSD-related medical treatment, sick leave and loss of productivity are estimated to exceed 5 billion euros annually. The association of OSD with the working environment is frequently not recognised to-date, often resulting in underreporting and a low number of notifications.

These numbers clearly show that targeted prevention measures are crucial in tackling the burden of OSD. Evidence-based prevention measures, developed together with dermatologists and the sectoral social partners over the past decade have proven to be successful. Appropriate dermatological interventions together with workers' education are key in preventing occupational skin diseases in all high-risk professions, including the hairdressing sector. The health and safety-related aspects of the working environment are stipulated in the aforementioned European Framework Agreement. It should be noted, however, that the Agreement does not mention high-heeled shoes. The graphic is therefore incorrect and misleading as far as the interpretation of the objectives of the Agreement is concerned.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/democratic-change/better-regulation/docs/better-regulation-1-year_en.pdf

The EADV very much hopes that the European Commission will stay firm to its commitment in further protecting and improving workers' health and safety. The recent "Healthy Workplaces Summit" in October 2015, organised by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), with the participation of the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility Marianne Thyssen, justifies our hope and contradicts what can only be construed as a mishap. Occupational health and safety is under no circumstance "small" and it is the Commission's responsibility to stay "big" on the issue. We ask the European Commission to officially retract these images from their publication.

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About EADV

Founded in 1987, EADV is a non-profit association whose vision is to be the premier European Dermato-Venereology Society, with the key aims of improving the quality of patient care, providing continuing medical education (CME) for all Dermato-Venereologists in Europe and advocacy on behalf of the specialty and patients.

The membership concept has been broadened to include all areas of Europe and elsewhere, and the development of alliances and affiliations with other organisations.

For further information about the Academy, please contact us under +32 2 650 00 90 or visit www.eadv.org