



Application of the European Multi-Sectoral Social Dialogue Agreement on Workers' Health Protection through the Good Handling and Use of Crystalline Silica and Products Containing It

**Executive Summary
December 2024**

1. Introduction

In 2024, for the ninth time, the Employer and Employee Signatories (see list enclosed as Annex I) have reported on the application of the European Social Dialogue “**Agreement on workers’ health protection through the good handling and use of crystalline silica and products containing it**” signed¹ on 25 April 2006.

The 2024 reporting of NEPSI Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of the two last years (2022-2023) started on 15 January and ended on 30 May 2024.

The online reporting by industrial sites of eight Key Performance Indicators, every two years, remains the pillar of the Agreement. A bi-partite Council set up by the signatories is monitoring the evolution in the application and is assessing whether the Agreement reaches its three-fold objective of *protecting the health* of employees occupationally exposed to respirable crystalline silica at the workplace, *minimizing such exposure* by applying Good Practices and *increasing the knowledge* about potential health effects of respirable crystalline silica as well as about Good Practices. The results of the reporting exercise are presented in this 2024 summary report.

Through the present Executive Summary, the Signatories wish to report on their activities since 2022.

In July 2022, thanks to a European Commission grant, NEPSI launched a 2-years project “NEPSI in ACTION” to enhance the health and safety of workers, by promoting at national level a series of new materials and tools, with a focus on SMEs and new workers.

2. NEPSI Activities from June 2022 to July 2024

2.1. NEPSI in ACTION Project 2022-2024 under EC grant

NEPSI in ACTION, is a project of two years (July 2022 - December 2024), with the objective not only to disseminate and promote the new developed tools at national level but to build knowledge on good practices, such as NEPSI, and national legislation, and how these two complement each other. More specifically, the project included the following parts:

¹ In accordance with the EC Treaty, Article 139 [III-212], published in OJ C 279, 17.11.2006

a) Opening Conference

The NEPSI in ACTION Opening Conference which took place on 22 November gathered 100 participants. At the NEPSI in ACTION Conference, Stefan Olsson (*European Commission, Deputy Director-General of DG Employment for Jobs, Skills and Social Policies*), Claude Rolin (*former EU MEP, notably responsible for the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive first revisions*) and Brenda O'Brien (*Brussels Liaison Manager of the EU OSHA Agency*) expressed their continuous support to NEPSI positive actions for the health of workers exposed to respirable crystalline silica dust.

After the opening conference, the European social partner's signatories of the NEPSI Social Dialogue Agreement released a Joint Declaration to announce the launch of the NEPSI in ACTION project.

b) National seminars

The first NEPSI in ACTION seminar took place in **Paris, France** on 14th February 2023. The 80 participants of the seminar benefited from the presence and participation of the representation of the European Commission in France, the Directorate-General for Labour, the ANSES, and prevention institutes such as INRS and CARSAT. Two lively interactive roundtables were held to dig into existing good practices accompanying the French legislation and explore issues and needs of the SMEs concerning the prevention of dust and the training of young workers.

The seminar in **Budapest, Hungary** hosted around 40 people (social partners from signatory sectors and representatives of Hungarian authorities/institutions) who gathered to learn about the new NEPSI tools and exchange on the interaction of good practices and Hungarian legislation. We were grateful to have Ms. Domokosné Dr. Ágnes Nagy, the Head of Department, of Hungarian Ministry of Economic Development, Mr. Ferenc Nédó, the Labour Protection Officer of the Ministry of Economic Development Department for Occupational Safety and Health Management, Dr. Ferenc Kudász, the Hungarian delegate of the UEMS Occupational Medicine and others. One interactive roundtable was held to discuss the issues and needs of the SMEs and the training of young workers. One of the key points which was repeated is the need for a continuous training of workers.

The third seminar was held in **Stockholm, Sweden** assembling 35 people. We were pleased to hear about the importance of good working conditions at the workplace, the Swedish legislation and Strängbetong's (cement sector) and Zinkgruvan's (mining sector) company experiences. During the roundtable discussion it was made clear that Sweden has high awareness of the exposure of crystalline silica. The need to provide the best protection for the workers was felt very strongly. It was enriching to see that Sweden always aims for Zero accidents. Further, it was remarkable the good level of cooperation which exists between the employees and the employers. Social dialogue is cultural in Sweden.

On 18th October 2023, NEPSI was in **Rome, Italy** with around 80 people participating. Sibelco shared the monitoring and good practices in the company, the Sindacato (Trade Union Organisation) and Confindustria (Employers' Organisation) provided the Italian point of view of silica and European legislation.

During this seminar, we were informed about an Italian Silica Monitoring project and a regional Protocol signed in Emilia Romagna, which was created by the social partners. It was rewarding to know that NEPSI is mentioned in the Italian legislation and that the Social Dialogue agreement is considered an essential element parallel to legislation.

The seminar in **Madrid, Spain**, was held on 24th January 2024 and assembled over 80 participants. There were several presentations considering the Spanish legislation and good practices, and company experiences on dust reduction. The two roundtable discussions were vivid and insightful. It was made clear that there is a unique situation in Spain where mines and quarries are covered by a specific, stricter legislation than the other sectors.

NEPSI in ACTION 6th seminar took place in **Kassel, Germany**, on 27 February 2024. Around 60 people got together to learn about the new NEPSI tools and exchange on the interaction of good practices and German legislation. Mrs Romy Marx from the German Ministry of Labor in her introduction stressed the need of good initiatives from the industry, like NEPSI Good Practices. It was exceptional to see how the BGs and other institutes support the SMEs to either raise awareness or provide subsidies when this is possible. Further, it was made clear that in Germany there are numerous good practices and guidance document when talking about exposure to the dust and handling of machines/equipment. They give a good example for the other EU countries.

The last NEPSI IN ACTION seminar took place in **Warsaw, Poland** on 17 September 2024 with 55 participants. There was an active participation of the national labour inspectorate in this seminar, witnessing notably some measurement challenges of respirable crystalline silica by the Polish labs in the transposition of Directive 2017/2398/EC. There were also interesting presentations on the application of the NEPSI good practices in a variety of industry sectors. A usual the seminar closed with an animated roundtable discussion on the challenges and needs in the reduction of RCS exposure at work.

In all the seminars, European Commission DG Employment Health and Safety unit representative provided an overview of the CMRD and its provisions and the OEL process of RCS. They highlighted that the European Commission supports NEPSI and its work.

To know more about the seminars, please visit the NEPSI website to read the reports, watch the interviews and view the photos capturing the highlights of the seminars.

<https://nepsi.eu/en/implementation/events/>

c) E-learning training modules

The NEPSI e-learning Task Force with the help of the Communication Agency, Leidar, worked on new e-learning modules and a simplified platform to host these courses. The two modules which developed are: a) NEPSI Guidance Task Sheets and b) Good practices for independent workers, subcontractors, mobile workers. Those trainings offer reading material and quiz questions and gaming, aiming to provide an interactive learning for the workers. After the completion for each of the courses, the worker receives a certificate which can be forwarded to his employer.

d) NEPSI 2024 KPIs Reporting & improvement of the system

In March 2023, the NEPSI Secretariat together with the NEPSI Helpdesk, David Yelland, organised a training to discuss possible improvements of the system to secure a good participation and correct interpretation of the questions. The changes were completed in advance of the 2024 NEPSI KPIs reporting period.

The 2024 NEPSI KPIs Reporting started on 15 January 2024 and ended on 30 May 2024. A communication was circulated all NEPSI signatories and member companies to demonstrate the importance of the reporting exercise.

e) Closing Conference

The Closing Conference is scheduled for 21st November 2024. At this Conference authorities, national H&S Institutes, industry players and trade unions are invited to witness the recap and outcome of the NEPSI in ACTION seminar. The organising team for each seminar will attend the conference to testimony their national experience. Further, two roundtables are organised to allow profound discussions and interaction with the audience.

f) Follow-up

NEPSI social partners have applied for a new grant from the European Commission in June 2024 entitled “NEPSI PROPAGATION” to pursue the success of “NEPSI IN ACTION”, creating a platform for national exchanges and initiatives, organizing more seminars in five countries across Europe, and investigating and documenting modern and innovative health and safety tools. The NEPSI Agreement will celebrate 20 years of existence in 2026 and is more active than ever in the field of workers health protection.

2.2. NEPSI promotion - meetings and presentations

The NEPSI Social Dialogue Agreement (SDA) has been well recognized over the past years by authorities, industry sectors and health and safety experts as an industry best practice to reduce RCS dust and associated risks at the workplace.

On 7th December 2023, Ms Antigoni Effraimidou presented the NEPSI SDA and its latest achievements at the European Extractive Industries Social Partners Kick-Off Conference of SODISEES. SODISEES is a two-year social dialogue project and stands for “Strengthen Social Dialogue to Improve Sustainable practices in the European Extractive Industries”.

The NEPSI developments are regularly presented to the sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for the Extractive industries and to the Standing Working Party for the Extractive industries.

The NEPSI SDA was mentioned numerous times, including from the European Commission, as a successful Social Dialogue Agreement.

3. NEPSI 2024 results

It has been 16 years since the first reporting of KPIs and it is pleasing to continue seeing positive results and high participation of NEPSI signatories. The participation in the 2024 NEPSI KPIs reporting remains good and stable with more than 85% reported sites.

In the 2024 reporting, the following points can be highlighted:

- The number of reporting sites (9057) has slightly decreased by 3,4% in comparison to 2022.
- The total number of employees is similar to 2022, with a slight increase of less than 1%
- The percentage of potentially exposed workers of 41,4% in 2024, has remained steady since the first reporting in 2008.

All Key Performance Indicators have remained similar when compared to 2022.

- ✓ The percentage of potentially exposed workers covered by **risk assessment** is 95,7% in 2024, compared to 96,2 % in 2022 (and 88% at the first reporting in 2008).
- ✓ The percentage of potentially exposed workers covered by **exposure monitoring** is 84,5%, compared to 84,6% in 2020 (and 64,5% at the first reporting in 2008).
- ✓ In 2024, 83,7 % of the employees were covered by **generic health surveillance**.
- ✓ In 2024, 92,4 % of potentially exposed workers whose risk assessment indicate that they require **Health Surveillance Protocol for Silicosis** were actually covered by this health surveillance.
- ✓ The percentage of potentially exposed workers covered by information, instruction and **training on General Principles** is of 91,7% in 2024, same as in 2022, and significantly better than at the first reporting in 2008 (75%).
- ✓ The percentage of potentially exposed workers covered by information, instruction and **training on specific task sheets** is 73,7% in 2024, a slight decrease compared to 2022 (75,3%) and incredibly improved since the first reporting in 2008 of 42,8%.

These figures show that there is still a strong commitment to retain the scope of the SDA intact.

2024 NEPSI KPIs:

Consolidated Report: EU Countries /Signatories									
	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022	2024
Section 1: General Information									
Number of Sites:	5102	6395	6922	7184	7550	8785	10359	10885	10588
Number of Reported Sites:	4607	5526	6047	5951	6234	7445	8795	9377	9057
% of Reported Sites:	93,1%	97,6%	97,3%	82,8%	82,6%	84,7%	84,9%	86,1%	85,5%
Number of Reported Employees:	410909	438113	472991	440159	433411	445923	362469	384346	384592
Section 2: Exposure Risk									
Number of Employees potentially exposed to Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS):	163662	176533	189593	176660	171084	181739	156381	162328	159176
Section 3: Risk Assessment & Dust Monitoring									
Among the number of employees potentially exposed to RCS, Number of Employees covered by risk assessment:	144142	159664	173425	164554	162562	173520	151931	156239	152336
Among the number of employees potentially exposed to RCS, Number of Employees covered by exposure monitoring:	105652	122115	136003	129682	130627	143456	135069	137361	134464
Among the number of employees potentially exposed to RCS, Number of Employees with risk assessment requiring Health Surveillance Protocol for Silicosis:	63837	63846	71144	70462	73715	80297	71131	73043	76593
Section 4: Health Surveillance									
Among the number of employees potentially exposed to RCS, Number of Employees covered by generic health surveillance protocol:	143153	155452	170678	157456	155175	166185	141745	139056	133263
Among the number of employees potentially exposed to RCS, Number of Employees covered by Health Surveillance Protocol for Silicosis:	56838	60591	67824	66998	70910	78108	68831	69353	70751
Section 5: Training									
Among the number of employees potentially exposed to RCS, Number of Employees covered by information, instruction and training on General Principles:	122710	146396	159293	155598	154079	161194	147244	148886	145924
Among the number of employees potentially exposed to RCS, Number of Employees covered by information, instruction and training on Task Sheets:	70038	96359	113556	115077	115479	119816	116749	122277	117258
Section 6: Good Practices									
Technical measures to reduce generation/dispersion of fine particles at source:	3235	4179	4619	4495	4937	5792	6240	6130	5770
Organizational measures:	2725	4032	4437	4375	4824	5646	6065	5941	5658
Distribution and use of Personal Protective Equipment:	3553	4460	4897	4756	4851	6006	6311	6498	6214
Key Performance Indicators									
% of Employees potentially exposed to respirable crystalline silica:	39,8%	40,3%	40,1%	40,1%	39,5%	40,8%	43,1%	42,2%	41,4%
% covered by risk assessment:	88,1%	90,4%	91,5%	93,1%	95,0%	95,5%	97,2%	96,2%	95,7%
% covered by exposure monitoring:	64,6%	69,2%	71,7%	73,4%	76,4%	78,9%	86,4%	84,6%	84,5%

% with risk assessment requiring Health Surveillance Protocol for Silicosis:	39,0%	36,2%	37,5%	39,9%	43,1%	44,2%	45,5%	45,0%	48,1%
% covered by generic health surveillance:	87,5%	88,1%	90,0%	89,1%	90,7%	91,4%	90,6%	85,7%	83,7%
% covered by Health Surveillance Protocol for Silicosis:	34,7%	34,3%	35,8%	37,9%	41,4%	43,0%	44,0%	42,7%	44,4%
% covered by information, instruction and training on General Principle:	75,0%	82,9%	84,0%	88,1%	90,1%	88,7%	94,2%	91,7%	91,7%
% covered by information, instruction and training on Task Sheets:	42,8%	54,6%	59,9%	65,1%	67,5%	65,9%	74,7%	75,3%	73,7%

Additional Key Performance Indicators									
% of those identified as requiring Health Surveillance Protocol for Silicosis covered	89,0%	94,9%	95,3%	95,1%	96,2%	97,3%	96,8%	94,9%	92,4%

Number of Sites where employees have potential exposure to RCS							6674	6722	6493
% Sites where Technical measures taken to reduce generation/dispersion of fine particles at source:							93,5%	91,2%	88,9%
% Sites where Organizational measures taken							90,9%	88,4%	87,1%
% Sites which distribute and use of Personal Protective Equipment:							94,6%	96,7%	95,7%

2. NEPSI Council Conclusions

The KPIs reporting makes the NEPSI Social Dialogue Agreement unique, as its implementation is carefully monitored over the years. The stable participation of the NEPSI signatories demonstrates their continuous commitment to ensure a healthy and safe environment for the workers.

It is encouraging to see that although the number of potentially exposed workers has remained steady since 2008, the KPIs are in continuous improvement.

The 2024 KPIs are good and very similar to the figures of 2022 reporting.

The generic health surveillance KPI from 90,5% in 2020 decreased to 85,7% in 2022 and now to 83,7% in 2024. The first reduction was already discussed in 2023 and the experts provided further clarification on the content of the Help box, which provides the user with a clear interpretation of the question. As the KPI in 2024 reporting has not improved, the analysis of this indicator needs to be refined. It might be interesting to make a review of the national practices concerning workers' general health surveillance policies.

Today NEPSI represents



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