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**Onderwerp:** ETUC wants precautionary principle applied to nanotechnologies

Brussels, 26/06/2008



*The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) adopted a first resolution on nanotechnologies and nanomaterials at its recent Executive Committee meeting. The key demand: the precautionary principle must apply to nanotechnologies.*

**European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC]  
 Confédération européenne des syndicats [CES]**

Nanotechnology is a fast-growing field of activity in many sectors of industry, especially the chemical, pharmaceutical and electronics industries. As a result, the number of workers coming into contact with nanomaterials – objects whose size is measured in billionths of a metre – is set to rise sharply in the coming years. The ETUC is convinced that nanotechnologies and manufactured nanomaterials might have considerable development and application potential. However, the ETUC notes that significant uncertainties revolve around both the benefits of nanotechnologies to our society and their harmful effects of manufactured nanomaterials on human health and the environment. *"After the asbestos scandal, the ETUC finds it unacceptable that products should now be manufactured without their potential effects on human health and the environment being known unless a precautionary approach has been applied and made transparent to the workers"*, argues ETUC Confederal Secretary Joël Decaillon. The resolution sets out a series of demands on different aspects of nanotechnology development:

#### **Marketing:**

REACH's "no data, no market" principle must apply: nanometre forms of chemicals should not be allowed on the market unless sufficient data are supplied to show no harmful effect for human health and the environment;

All nanomaterials, including those produced or imported in quantities below 1 tonne per year, must come within the REACH registration requirements;

A chemical safety report must be produced for all REACH-registered substances for which a nanometre scale use has been identified.

#### **Worker protection:**

Amend Chemical Agents Directive 98/24/EC to require employers to implement risk reduction measures for substances not proven to be harmless;

Involve workers and their representatives in the assessment and reduction of nanomaterial-related risks;

Improve worker information about nanomaterials that may be present in products to which they are exposed: safety data sheets must state whether nanomaterials are present;

Provide training and health surveillance for workers exposed to nanomaterials.

#### **R & D:**

Earmark at least 15% of public research budgets for health and environmental aspects;  
 Make health and safety at work aspects a compulsory part of all research projects.

The ETUC calls on the European Commission and Member States to ensure real participation by European citizens in the debate on these new technologies.

#### [\*\*ETUC resolution on nanotechnologies and nanomaterials\*\*](#)

*The ETUC exists to speak with a single voice, on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 82 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 12 industry-based federations.*

#### **For more information :**

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