



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 11 May 2010
9619/10 (Presse 112)

Council adopts rules to prevent injuries to healthcare workers

The Council today¹ adopted a directive aimed at achieving the safest possible working environment for healthcare workers through prevention from sharps injuries ([7318/10](#) + [8491/10](#)).

Injuries caused by needles and other sharp instruments are one of the most common and serious risks to healthcare workers in Europe and represent a high cost for health systems and society in general. According to healthcare experts, such injuries occur more than 1 million times per year, partly causing very serious consequences and sometimes leading to serious diseases.

The new directive gives legal effect to a framework agreement concluded by the employers and the trade unions of the hospital and healthcare sector (HOSPEEM and EPSU) on 17 July 2009.

¹ The decision was taken at a meeting of the Council in charge of Education, Youth and Culture in Brussels.

P R E S S

The directive sets up an integrated approach to assessing and preventing risks and to training and informing workers. If a risk assessment reveals a risk of injury, the workers' exposure must be eliminated by taking measures such as implementing safe procedures for using and disposing of sharp medical instruments and disposing of contaminated waste, eliminating the unnecessary use of sharps and banning the practice of recapping.¹

Member states have three years in which to transpose the new directive into national law.

¹ The practice of recapping refers to needles without safety and protection mechanisms. Modern devices with safety mechanisms are not banned unless they pose a risk of injury.