

Limit values for lead and its inorganic compounds and diisocyanates

2023/0033(COD) - 08/09/2023 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted the report by Nikolaj VILLUMSEN (GUE/NGL, DK) on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 98/24/EC and Directive 2004/37/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards limit values for lead, its inorganic compounds and diisocyanates.

The proposal aims to revise the existing limit values for lead and to introduce limit values for diisocyanates for the first time, thereby helping to achieve a high level of protection for the health and safety of workers.

The committee responsible recommended that the European Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the Commission's proposal.

Regarding the limit values for **lead**, the report supports the Commission's proposal to lower the exposure limit value (ELV) from 0.15 milligrams per cubic metre (0.15 mg/m³) to 0.03 mg/m³ and to lower the biological limit value (BLV) from 70 micrograms per 100 millilitres of blood (70µg/100ml) to 15µg/100ml.

With regard to diisocyanates, it is proposed to establish an occupational exposure limit value of **6 µg NCO /m³** and a short-term exposure limit value of **12 µg NCO/m³** for this group of chemical agents.

The report introduces a **review mechanism guaranteeing regular revisions** in the future to ensure that these limit values are regularly updated, taking into account the latest scientific data.

In particular, the Commission should:

- no later than 31 December 2029, launch a process to review the occupational exposure limit and short-term occupational exposure limit values for diisocyanates;
- draw up Union guidelines on how to adapt the implementation of limit values in the event of exposure to a combination of substances acting by the same mode of action or on the same target cell or tissue;
- no later than 31 December 2023, present a legislative proposal to introduce a limit value for **cobalt** and inorganic cobalt compounds;
- no later than 12 months after the date of entry into force of the amending Directive, review the implementation of the Directive and, as part of this review, determine whether any further amendments to the Directive are necessary, assess the possibility of including **endocrine disruptors** within the scope of the Directive and, if appropriate, submit a legislative proposal to the European Parliament and the Council;
- no later than five years after the date of entry into force of the amending Directive and every five years thereafter, review the Occupational Exposure Limit Value and the Biological Limit Values including the **limit value for historical exposure and the guidance value for female workers of childbearing age**, taking into account the negative impacts on the reproductive capacity of female workers of childbearing

age as well as on foetal development in order to ensure equal protection for all workers regardless of their gender as well as taking into account up-to-date scientific data and the classification of lead as a non-threshold reprotoxic;

- twelve months after the date of entry into force of the amending Directive, develop a definition of **‘carcinogenic occupations’** and assess the appropriateness to include such occupations in the scope of this Directive;

- no later than twelve months after the date of entry into force of the amending Directive, develop guidelines as regards **historical occupational exposure to lead** with a view to increasing the protection and reduction of the exposure of workers whose blood-lead levels are above the biological limit value as well as to further protect female workers of childbearing age;

- no later than one year after the directive comes into force, update its action plan aimed at defining occupational exposure limits for at least 5 substances or groups of substances or substances produced by additional processes. These include lithium and its compounds, methyl hydrazine, 1,3-propanesultone, welding fumes and leather dust;

- no later than twelve months after the date of entry into force of the amending directive, to consider, in consultation with the social partners, consider targeted and limited exemptions for cultural and heritage-related work activities to existing Occupational Exposure Limit Values and Biological Limit Values, and take appropriate action;

- no later than 1 January 2028, assess the feasibility of further reducing the limit value for **benzene** and present, if appropriate, the necessary legislative amendments to this Directive no later than 1 January 2030.