Limit values for lead and its inorganic compounds and diisocyanates

2023/0033(COD) - 07/02/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 589 votes to 10, with 40 abstentions, a legislative resolution 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 the limit values for lead and its inorganic compounds and diisocyanates.

Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the proposal as follows:

Limit values for lead

The proposed directive lays down a revised biological limit value of **15 µg Pb/100 ml** blood, accompanied by a revised occupational exposure limit value of **0,03 mg/m3** as an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA).

A substantial reduction of the biological limit value to 15 µg Pb/100 ml blood may be difficult to comply with in the short term, due to the time needed to implement risk-management measures and the costly adaptation of production processes. Therefore, a transitional period until 31 December 2028 should be introduced during which a biological limit value of **30 µg Pb/100** ml blood applies.

The Commission should, no later than **five years** from the date of entry into force of this amending Directive, assess the occupational limit values for lead and its inorganic compounds. Where appropriate, the Commission should submit a legislative proposal to amend those limit values.

A notation as **'non-threshold reprotoxic substance'** should therefore be introduced for lead and its inorganic compounds and employers should ensure that the occupational exposure of workers to lead and its inorganic compounds is reduced to as low a level as is technically possible.

No later than two years from the date of entry into force of this amending Directive, the Commission should initiate the procedure to obtain a **scientific assessment** of endocrine disruptors that can affect the health and safety of workers, with a view to evaluating the appropriateness of including them within the scope of this Directive in order to better protect the health and safety of workers.

Limit values are set for diisocyanates

The new directive sets the occupational exposure limit for diisocyanates at **6 µg NCO/m3** (the maximum concentration that a worker can be exposed to during an eight-hour working day) and at **12 µg NCO/m3** for short-term exposure (i.e., a period of 15 minutes).

A limit value of 10 µg NCO/m3 in relation to a reference period of 8 hours and a short-term exposure limit value of **20 µg NCO/m3** should apply until 31 December 2028.

The Commission will review these limits by 2029.

Medical surveillance

Lead accumulates in the bones and is released slowly into the circulatory system. The blood lead level could thus remain high for a long time after exposure to lead and its inorganic compounds has been reduced. Regular medical surveillance should therefore be carried out for workers whose blood lead level exceeds the biological limit value in force due to exposure which occurred before two years from the date of entry into force of this amending Directive.

Medical surveillance is carried out if exposure to a concentration of lead in air is greater than 0.015 mg /m3, calculated as a time-weighted average over 40 hours per week, or a blood lead level greater than 9 g Pb/100 ml blood is measured in individual workers. Medical surveillance is also carried out with regard to female workers of childbearing age whose blood lead level exceeds 4.5 µg Pb/100 ml blood or the national reference value of the general population not occupationally exposed to lead, if such a value exists.

No later than two years from the date of entry into force of this amending Directive, the Commission should draw up Union guidelines for health surveillance, including biological monitoring. Those guidelines shall include advice on the implementation of provisions regarding blood lead level, taking into account the slow removal of lead from the body and the special protection of female workers of childbearing age.