Safety and health at work: exposure of workers to noise

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Following an exchange of letters, the Conciliation Committee finally reached agreement on a joint text for the directive. The main points of the compromise package can be summarised as follows: - workers will be better protected from risks arising from exposure to noise: the upper exposure action value over an 8-hour period has been set at 85 dB(A) and the impulsional noise upper action value (Peak) at 140 Pa (i.e. 137 dB in relation to 20 mPa). It will be obligatory for workers to wear individual hearing protectors where the noise exposure reaches these values. Preventive audiometric testing shall be available at a lower noise level, if the exposure exceeds the lower exposure action values (80dB(A) over an 8-hour period and Peak = 112 Pa (i.e. 135 dB in relation to 20mPa)) and there is a verified risk to health; - employers will be obliged to pay particular attention to the availability of hearing protectors with adequate attenuation characteristics. They are responsible for checking the effectiveness of the personal protection measures and obliged to make every effort to ensure that employees wear individual hearing protectors; - workers and/or their representatives shall be consulted and participate as far as the assessment of risks, the identification of measures, actions reducing risks and choice of individual hearing protectors are concerned; - the specific nature of the music and entertainment sectors will be taken into account in the implementation of the provisions of the Directive. The Member States shall draw up, in consultation with the social partners, a code of conduct providing for practical guidelines to help workers in these sectors to meet the obligations laid down in the Directive. In addition, with regard to these sectors the Member States are entitled to make use of a maximum transitional period of a total of five years from the entry into force of the Directive on condition that the levels of protection already achieved are maintained; - the Member States' reports to the European Commission on the implementation of the directive shall contain a description of best practices for preventing noise. On the basis of the Member States' reports, the Commission shall carry out an overall assessment of the implementation of the Directive taking into account inter alia the implications of the Directive for the music and entertainment sectors.