Safety, hygiene and health at work: 4th Community programme(SAVE) 1996-2000

1995/0155(CNS) - 22/11/1995 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The Economic and Social Committee welcomed the general direction of the Commission programme and proposed Council decision. It was disappointed, however, that the practical objectives of the programme were ambiguous, that the methods of action were in some instances vague and unclearly costed, and that the case for a European occupational health and safety ‘action’ programme had not been convincingly stated. Little or no mention was made of Article 118a, which was the clear and uncontested Treaty provision for improving basic health and safety standards at the workplace. The ESC urged the Commission to incorporate in the programme its unanimously agreed Opinion of April 1994, which on the question of legislation stated that: ‘There must be a review of the existing body of Community occupational safety and health legislation to see which major risk issues are still not addressed by specific Directives’. It was of vital importance that existing directives be implemented in all Member States, in the interest of employees and to the benefit of fair competition between Member States. As underlined in earlier Opinions of the ESC, ‘consolidation of legislative texts ought to involve simplification of standards without any lowering of standards or diluting of existing requirements’. The ESC welcomed the Commission’s attention to the health and safety needs of the self-employed.