

Safety at work: work equipment, minimum requirements (amend. Directive 89/655/EEC)

1994/0077(SYN) - 23/10/1995

In an attempt to extend safety protection for Europe's workers, the committee rejected the Council's bid to remove equipment used by scaffolders and woodworkers from the scope of Europe-wide legislation. The committee was considering a proposed directive to harmonize minimum safety requirements throughout the European Union in respect of certain equipment used at work. The equipment includes fork-lift trucks and lifting apparatus. The harmonized standards include minimum rules for using equipment and for its periodic inspection. Under the proposed legislation, in so far as they could be affected, workers must be made aware of the dangers resulting from equipment located at a work site, even if they do not use such equipment directly. At an earlier meeting to consider the directive, the committee had approved measures to include equipment used by scaffolders and woodworkers within its scope, but these had been thrown out later by the Council when it adopted its common position (C4-0371/95) on the proposed legislation. However, when the proposed directive returned to the committee on Monday 23 October for reconsideration under the cooperation procedure, the committee reinstated the measures in question and recommended that the proposed legislation receive a second reading in the House. This is expected to take place at the part-session from 13 to 17 November in Strasbourg. While concerned to ensure that workers throughout Europe have at least a common minimum level of protection, the committee has also been anxious to ensure that companies - and in particular small and medium-sized undertakings - do not face unreasonable costs when it comes to implementing the harmonized safety measures. As a result, it decided that companies will have until the end of 2001 to comply with the legislation in respect of equipment installed up to the end of 1998. The proposed directive is intended to supplement Directive 89/655/EEC, which lays down minimum safety and health requirements for the use of work equipment. The committee's recommendation for a second reading was drawn up by Mr Peter SKINNER (PES, UK). While the aim of the legislation is to set minimum legal standards throughout Europe, it will not prevent Member States from adopting stricter limits for their own workers.