Safety and security at work: protection from the risks related to exposure to asbestos (amend. Directive 83/477/EEC)

2001/0165(COD) - 19/03/2002

The committee adopted the report by Elisa Maria DAMIÃO (PES, P) amending the proposal under the codecision procedure (1st reading) with a view to increasing the level of protection for workers both inside and outside work sites. It called for the exposure limits to asbestos to be reduced in the case of certain types of work (demolition, repair work, maintenance, etc.) and also wanted the reference period for measuring exposure to be reduced from 8 to 4 hours in all cases. It added that the rules should apply to any employer responsible for carrying out the work, including sub-contractors. The report also stipulated that the public bodies responsible for civil protection and health and safety at work should provide information and training for SMEs and the self-employed, the costs of which should be financed in accordance with national legislation. It expanded the list of people and organisations required to supply information to identify materials presumed to contain asbestos and called for warning signs to be displayed around work sites where asbestos was present. Other recommendations made by the committee included: drawing up national registries of public buildings and of industrial and commercial buildings and sites containing asbestos, drawing up national registers of suitable and competent firms for carrying out asbestos demolition or removal work and keeping comprehensive, up-to-date registers of asbestos-related diseases. MEPs also felt that, in cases where there was any doubt as to whether ill health was due to occupational exposure to asbestos, the burden of proof should lie with the employer. A further amendment called on the Commission to come up with a proposal by the end of 2003 for common diagnostic criteria. Lastly, the committee called for the Member States to introduce dissuasive sanctions against breaches of national legislation based on the directive.