

# Safety, hygiene and health at work: Community programme 1996-2000. Reports included

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**OBJECTIVE:** presentation of the XXIst annual activity report (1996) of the Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at work. **SUBSTANCE:** The report outlines the activities of the Advisory Committee in 1996. The committee was set up by Decision 74/325/EEC and its task is to conduct exchanges of views regarding existing or planned rules and regulations regarding hygiene and health at work and the protection of workers and to contribute towards the development of a common approach to problems in this sector. It is also called on to define the criteria and aims of action to combat the risk of accidents at work and improve information flows to national administrations, trade unions and employers' organizations regarding Community measures in this area. It is made up of representatives of Member State governments, trade unions and employers' organizations (6 members per State). In 1996 progress made by the committee mirrored the work undertaken by the Commission in the field of social affairs. Specific working groups were set up with terms of reference in the following areas: standardization, work-related stress, occupational exposure levels, scaffolding and pregnant women at work, together with a group responsible for organizational aspects of the Advisory Committee's own operating procedures. At the end of 1996, 11 opinions were adopted in the following areas: - European schedule of occupational diseases, - exposure to asbestos, - exposure-limit values, - work-related stress, - electromagnetic radiation pre-standards, - equipment for fairgrounds and amusement parks as part of a draft standardization mandate addressed to the CEN/CENELEC, - personal protective equipment as part of the CEN/CENELEC mandate, - work programme of the Bilbao European Agency. In each of these opinions, the committee supported the proposals. In certain cases, consultation of the committee made it possible to establish a framework for future Community measures (for example review of a directive on exposure to asbestos around the year 2000), in other cases the Commission took the view that it was too early to take action (for example with regard to the European schedule of occupational diseases), while in other cases it was decided to continue examination of Commission proposals in 1997. A number of working parties were accordingly set up to consider in greater depth matters of concern to the committee regarding issues such as normalization (in cooperation with CEN/CENELEC), occupational exposure levels, scaffolding and pregnant women at work. Further developments are expected in these areas over the next few years. Finally, the report refers to cooperation by the committee with other bodies, such as the Safety and Health Commission for Mining and Other Extractive Industries, the Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee and other organizations representing the social partners and European specialized agencies. (Bilbao European Agency and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions).