

Safety at work: protection of workers against exposure to carcinogens agents

1995/0229(SYN) - 27/06/1997 - Final act

OBJECTIVE: to amend Directive 90/394/EEC to set new limit values for occupational exposure to carcinogens, particularly benzene. **COMMUNITY MEASURE:** Council Directive 97/42/EC amending for the first time Directive 90/394/EEC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens at work (Sixth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Directive 89/391/EEC). **SUBSTANCE:** the main amendments to the Directive have the purpose of: 1) amending the annex to Directive 90/394/EC so as to set limit values for the exposure of workers to benzene: 1 ppm for a reference period of 8 hours (or 3.25 mg/m³). Transitional measures are laid down to enable all the sectors concerned to comply with the new limit value, which they must do within three years of the date of transposition of the Directive in the Member States; 2) extending its scope to include exposure to preparations such as medicines for human or veterinary use, cosmetic products, mixtures of substances in the form of waste, pesticides, munitions and explosives, and foodstuffs; 3) inserting a new paragraph stipulating that the provisions to implement the Directive also apply to asbestos and vinyl chloride monomer, which are dealt with by specific Directives; 4) introducing the concept of 'limit value for occupational exposure' to carcinogens, defined as the limit on the concentration of a carcinogen in the air within the breathing zone of a worker in relation to a reference period of 8 hours. The Directive lays down that these values must not be exceeded under any circumstances; 5) amending the Directive so as to formulate a new strategy for monitoring exposed workers, taking into account the total effect of exposure (i.e. not only respiratory exposure but also exposure from penetration through the skin); 6) remedying certain textual blemishes which had totally negated the purpose of the original text in some language versions: the aim is to provide unambiguous protection for workers against polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) present in certain by-products of coal. **DEADLINE FOR TRANSPOSITION OF THE DIRECTIVE INTO NATIONAL LAW:** 27.06.2000.