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

1998/2015(COS) - 05/08/2004

The European Commission presented its 27th annual activity report of the advisory committee on safety, hygiene and health protection at work 2002.

In 2002, the Committee met on two occasions in Luxembourg, in April and November. At each meeting the Commission informed the Committee of developments with regard to all matters concerning safety, hygiene and health protection at work. The Committee adopted the annual activity report for 2001, together with two opinions which are reviewed below:

- Opinion on the Community strategy for health and safety at work (2002-2006) : following on from the opinion adopted in November 2001, the Committee's new opinion established the essential priorities for the correct implementation of the Community strategy 2002-2006. The Committee also emphasised the importance of establishing a European Risk Observatory, preparing a discussion document setting out the criteria for a possible benchmarking exercise in the field of health and safety at work, and defining indicators and ensuring that they are reliable through a rigorous examination of the credibility of existing sources or any sources that might be created. As regards possible legislation, an improvement in, and a concrete evaluation of, the way in which existing directives are applied must be undertaken by adapting evaluation reports and consolidating/simplifying existing legislation. The Committee would also welcome the rapid adoption of the new legislation currently under examination (physical agents, asbestos), adaptation of existing legislation on carcinogenic products, and amendment of the list of occupational diseases. Among the non-legislative instruments envisaged under the new strategy, the Committee emphasises the importance to be placed on the preparation of guides facilitating the implementation of directives and the need, in this connection, to develop a general approach for these instruments, identifying the users and appropriate forms of dissemination. It is also necessary to promote prevention training targeting employees, young people at school and persons attending vocational training. Special attention must also be paid to emerging risks (musculoskeletal disorders, psychosocial risks) and action to be taken in the context of the enlargement process.

- Opinion on the draft work programme for the Bilbao Agency for 2003 : the three groups welcome the fact that this year the Committee has been able to take note of the programme before its adoption by the Agency's Administrative Board. The government group fully supports the outlines and essential themes of the programme, while emphasising the importance of avoiding any duplication of work by the different institutions, given the very limited resources and the need for the various aspects of the programme to be better integrated.

The employers' group emphasises the need to find a reasonable balance between the necessarily ambitious nature of a European project and the associated risk of aiming too high. The group considers the objective very ambitious, in particular regarding the Agency's communication strategy, but the first thing should be to ensure that it corresponds to the right actors, the priorities of European policy and the available resources.

The workers' group supports certain remarks concerning the work programme, with which it is also generally in agreement.

Lastly, at its meeting on 13 November 2002, the Committee adopted its work programme for 2003, which reflects the indicative priorities set out in the forward timetable for implementation of the new Community strategy 2002-2006.