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

2001/0165(COD) - 27/03/2003 - Final act

PURPOSE: to protect workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Directive 2003/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 83/477/EEC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work.

CONTENT: The main point of the Directive is the introduction of a single limit value for the exposure of workers instead of the two years in the original Directive. It requires employers to ensure that no worker is exposed to an airborne concentration of asbestos in excess of 0,1 fibres per cm3 as an eight-hour time-weighted average (TWA).

The Directive applies to the maritime and air transport sectors, which was not the case under the original directive. Provisions regarding limited exposures are simplified; a method for measuring the the asbestos content of air, as well as detecting asbestos is provided for, as is the training of workers.

The Directive also prohibits activities that expose workers to asbestos fibres during asbestos extraction or the manufacture or processing of asbestos products (containing intentionally added asbestos) with the exception of the treatment and disposal of products resulting from demolition and asbestos removal.

The three amendments to the common position adopted by the European Parliament were incorporated in their entirety:

- appropriate breaks for workers using individual breathing equipment;

- the introduction of adequate sanctions in the event of breaches of national legislation based on the Directive;

- Member States should lay down practical guidelines for the determination of sporadic and low-intensity exposure.

It should be noted that the Directive is linked to the prohibition of the placing on the market of chrysotile asbestos introduced by Council Directive 276/769/EEC as amended by Commission Directive 1999/77 /EC, with effect from 1 January 2005.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 15/04/2003.

TRANSPOSITION: 15/04/2006.