

Safety and health at work: exposure of workers to mechanical vibrations

1992/0449(COD) - 08/12/2000 - Modified legislative proposal

Following the debates which led to the adoption of the common position on the draft directive dating from 1993 on the exposure of workers to risks caused by physical agents, it has been decided to propose a new text of the amended proposal on which the Council shall shortly come to a decision and which could lead to an agreement by most of the delegations. The new text concerns in particular the risks caused by mechanical vibrations, which is only one of the four agents taken into consideration in the 1993 proposal, taking account of the difficulty for the Member States to come to a conclusion on the whole of the proposal (noise, optic lights, electromagnetic fields and mechanical vibrations). The proposed amended Directive aims to combat against the effects of vibrations which cause muscular and skeletal disorders which are nowadays the first root of professional illness. It shall apply to cases of vibrations transmitted to the hands and the arms, causing in particular vascular problems, osteo-articular or muscular or neurological damage. It also applies to vibrations transmitted to the whole body, which leads in particular to the risk of trauma to the colon vertebral. The proposed directive accepts the level of actions beyond which specific prevention measures must be taken, such as the choice of working equipment produced, taking into consideration the work to be carried out, the least vibration possible or the right, for the workers concerned, to be subject to a health monitoring system. It sets the limit values of daily exposure on a reference period of 8 hours which must not be exceeded: - a limit value of 5m/s^2 for the vibrations transmitted to the hands and the arms; - a limit value of $1,15\text{m/s}^2$ for the vibrations to the whole body. The exposure values triggering an action are: - $2,5\text{m/s}^2$ for the vibrations transmitted to the hands and the arms; - $0,6\text{m/s}^2$ for the vibrations transmitted to the whole body. In order to take into consideration the technical difficulties of the application, in particular in SMEs, the proposed revised directive provides a transition period of 6 years for the application of the limit values. This period is brought back to 3 years when new materials are brought into service and may be brought to 9 years for agricultural and forestry equipment. The Member States have the option of lowering the application of the value limit for the maritime and air navigation sectors.