

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA
STANDING COMMITTEE
OF THE EFTA STATES

4/SP/W/008
10 March 1997
Brussels

WORKING GROUP ON SOCIAL POLICY

Comments by the EFTA Working Group¹
on an amended draft directive on Chemical Agents

1. The EFTA Working Group on Social Policy is pleased to submit to the Commission comments on the amended draft directive on the protection of health and safety of workers related to chemical agents at work. The comments are based on document SN 4880/96 (SOC) which is being discussed in the Technical Experts Meeting (Social Questions Working Party) of the Council.
2. In general, the proposed directive appears to be an improvement of the existing Directive 80/1107/EEC with amendments which constitute the legal basis within the EEA regarding protection of workers from risks related to chemical agents. The EEA EFTA States especially welcome the rearrangement of the original proposal from 1993, giving a much more practical arrangement of the directive.
3. Even though the overall impression is positive, the EEA EFTA side has some comments to the proposed directive.
4. The EEA EFTA side supports the new limitation of use of health surveillance as it is proposed in Article 10.1. in the SN 4880/96 (SOC). (The EEA EFTA States do not support the introduction of a general system of health surveillance as proposed in SN 4257/96 (SOC), because of the difficulty in identifying diseases and adverse health affects related to exposure to chemical agents, this being a complex picture resulting from the exposure of mixture of substances.)
5. The EEA EFTA States support the suggestion of one Member State to delete Article 4.4. In Article 5.2 carcinogens could be included with reference to the Council Directive 90/394/EEC.

¹ Comprising the delegations of the three EFTA EEA States Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

(continued)

6. In Annex II binding occupational exposure limits for lead and benzene are given as respectively 0,15 mg/m³ and 1 ppm. For example in Norway, the corresponding indicative limit values are 0,05 mg/m³ and 1 ppm, and the latter should probably be revised and reduced with regard to the carcinogenic potential. This makes Article 9.4 even more important, as it gives us the access to establish lower binding limit values, than those which are given in the directive.

7. Implementation of the proposed directive in the EEA EFTA States should be accompanied by the introduction of the EEA EFTA side's participation in the existing system for establishing occupational exposure limit values and biological limit values within the Community. The EEA EFTA States strongly recommend this to be set as a condition for the inclusion of this directive into the EEA Agreement.

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