



Directive 89/391/EEC

Framework Directive for Occupational Safety and Health

EU Directive 89/391/EEC, also known as the "Framework Directive," is a key piece of European Union legislation that sets out general principles for ensuring workers' health and safety at work. This directive, adopted on June 12, 1989, and entering into force on June 19, 1989, lays the foundation for managing workplace safety and health across all EU member states, focusing on preventive measures and employer obligations.

Scope and definitions

The directive applies to all sectors of activity, both public and private, with some exceptions for specific public services like armed forces or police. It defines key terms such as "worker," "employer," and "prevention," ensuring a common understanding across the EU.

Key aspects of directive 89/391/EEC

Employer Responsibility: Employers are required to ensure the safety and health of workers in every aspect related to work. They must take preventive measures, provide training, and conduct risk assessments.

Preventive Principles

- Avoiding risks
- Evaluating unavoidable risks
- Combating risks at source
- Adapting work to the individual (in terms of design and choice of work equipment)
- Replacing dangerous processes with safer alternatives

Worker Participation

Workers have the right to be informed and consulted about health and safety matters. This includes providing access to necessary information and enabling workers to participate in discussions about safety measures.

Risk Assessment

Employers are obliged to carry out risk assessments and implement measures to mitigate risks. This process must be systematic and cover all work-related hazards, including those that might not be immediately obvious.

Health and Safety Services

The directive requires employers to set up adequate internal or external health and safety services to assist in implementing health and safety measures.

Special Protection for Vulnerable Groups

Special attention should be given to pregnant women, young workers, and those with disabilities, ensuring they are adequately protected in the workplace.

Training and Instruction

Employers must provide appropriate health and safety training to employees, particularly when they are hired, transferred to new roles, or introduced to new equipment or technologies.

Designation of Responsible Workers

Employers are required to designate one or more workers to carry out activities related to the protection and prevention of occupational risks.

Impact and Implementation

This directive serves as a framework, meaning that each member state is responsible for implementing it through its own national laws while maintaining the same overall goals and obligations. It forms the basis for more specific directives related to chemical safety, noise, manual handling, and other sector-specific risks.

Member states were required to bring into force laws and regulations to comply with the directive by December 31, 1992. Since its adoption, the directive has been amended several times—in 2003, 2007, and 2008—to remain relevant in the changing work environment and new insights into occupational safety.

Directive 89/391/EEC continues to be a cornerstone of EU policy on workplace safety and health, providing a common basis for the protection of workers throughout the European Union.