



**STOP  
THE  
PANDEMIC**

# OSH and the use of PPE – legislative frame and EU-OSHA perspectives in the context of the pandemic

Elke Schneider, Prevention and Research Unit

CEN/Cenelec „Sustainability in PPE: addressing the challenges through standardization“, 18 March 2021



#EUhealthyworkplaces  
#StopthePandemic



- A body of the EU
- Established in 1996 in Bilbao, Spain
- To help improve working conditions in the European Union by **providing technical, scientific and economic information to people involved in safety and health at work.**
- **Tripartite Board bringing together:**
  - governments, employers' and workers' organisations
  - as well as from the European Commission

<http://osha.europa.eu>



# Directive 89/656/EEC - use of personal protective equipment

- Personal protective equipment must comply with provisions on design and manufacture with respect to safety and health.
- All PPE must
  - be appropriate for the risks involved, without itself leading to any increased risk
  - correspond to existing conditions at the workplace
  - take account of ergonomic requirements and the worker's state of health
  - fit the wearer correctly after any necessary adjustment.
- Employers must provide the appropriate equipment free of charge and must ensure that it is in good working order and hygienic condition.
- Where a worker has to wear simultaneously more than one item of PPE, such equipment must be compatible.
- **If the employer is going to clean or recycle used masks, gloves, aprons, etc., need for proper arrangements respecting the requirements**



# Directive 89/656/EEC - use of personal protective equipment

- PPE is, in principle, intended for personal use. If the circumstances require PPE to be worn by more than one person, appropriate measures to ensure the use does not create any health or hygiene problem for the different users.
- Before choosing personal protective equipment, employers have to assess whether PPE satisfies the requirements of this Directive.
- Member States shall ensure that general rules are established for the use of personal protective equipment and/or covering cases and situations where the employer must provide such equipment. There must be prior consultation with employers' and workers' organisations.
- Employers to provide training and demonstrate the use of PPE. Workers shall be informed of all measures to be taken.
- Consultation and participation shall take place on the matters covered by this Directive.
- Provisions of Directive 89/391/EEC - "the Framework Directive" - are fully applicable without prejudice to more restrictive and/or specific provisions contained in this Directive.



# Framework Directive 89/391 on occupational safety and health

The general principles of prevention:

- avoiding risks
- evaluating the risks
- combating the risks at source
- adapting the work to the individual
- adapting to technical progress
- replacing the dangerous by the non- or the less dangerous
- developing a coherent overall prevention policy
- **prioritising collective protective measures (over individual protective measures)**
- giving appropriate instructions to the workers



# EU OSH Legislation and Dangerous substances

- Risks must be eliminated or reduced to a minimum following the hierarchy of prevention measures
- Dangerous substances and processes should be completely eliminated from workplaces (e.g. designing new work processes)
- If elimination is not possible, the risk must be managed based on a **hierarchy of prevention measures** — the STOP principle:

**S**ubstitution (safe or less harmful alternatives)

**T**echnological measures (encasing, exhaust)

**O**rganisational measures (qualified employees for specified work)

**P**ersonal protection (wearing PPE)



# Healthy Workplaces Campaign 18-19 - Campaign resources provide information on the legislative framework for dangerous substances

**Healthy Workplaces Manage DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES**

**Legislative framework on dangerous substances in workplaces**

**Key Points**

- There is a comprehensive legislative framework in the European Union to protect workers from the risks of dangerous substances in workplaces.
- The most relevant pieces of legislation at the EU level are the OSH Framework Directive, the Chemical Agents Directive and the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive. These directives and their transposition into national law aim to reduce the exposure of workers to dangerous substances in workplaces.
- Legislation in other policy areas contributes to the reduction of risks from dangerous substances in workplaces, such as EU legislation on chemical substances and mixtures and also specific EU and international legislation on waste, storage and transport.
- Achieving a high level of implementation of the legislation in practice is a key challenge, including following the principle of preferentially applying the most effective preventive measures.

**Healthy Workplaces Manage Dangerous Substances**

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) is running a Europe-wide campaign from 2018 to 2019 to promote the prevention of risks from dangerous substances in workplaces. The aim is to reduce the presence of and exposure to dangerous substances in workplaces by raising awareness of the risks and of effective ways of preventing them.

**Healthy Workplaces Manage DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES**

**Carcinogens at work**

**Key Points**

- A carcinogen is a substance that is capable of causing, aggravating or promoting cancer in humans or animals. Some carcinogens can be inhaled, others may enter through the skin or mucous membranes. More detailed definitions are included in the European Directive and national legislation.
- Not every exposure to carcinogens will inevitably lead to cancer: some act following high-level, prolonged exposure, while others act at lower levels and following shorter exposure periods.
- There are a number of carcinogens that workers can be exposed to. Commonly known occupational carcinogens include asbestos, radon, certain pesticides, arsenic and tobacco smoke.
- Many of the carcinogens to which workers are most frequently exposed are generated by the work process. Examples include diesel exhaust, welding fumes, crystalline silica dust and hardwood dust. Carcinogens may also be present in raw materials (including resins/epoxies), intermediates, products or by-products.
- The effects of exposure to carcinogens may occur a long time after exposure.
- Under EU legislation, particularly stringent measures — in addition to those required for other dangerous substances — must be taken by employers to prevent harm: eliminating exposure or where this is not possible, strict substitution, keeping the carcinogen in a closed system, recording exposures, and strict information and documentation requirements.
- Any detailed provisions for the occupational safety and health (OSH) management of carcinogens are laid down in national regulations. It is therefore strongly recommended that clarification of national requirements is sought.

**Healthy Workplaces Manage Dangerous Substances**

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) runs a Europe-wide campaign during 2018 and 2019 to promote the prevention of risks from dangerous substances in workplaces. The aim is to reduce the presence of and exposure to dangerous substances in workplaces by raising awareness of the risks and of effective ways of preventing them.

# Covid -19 resources

- **COVID-19: Guidance for the workplace**
- **COVID-19: Back to the workplace - Adapting workplaces and protecting workers – OSH wiki article, includes links sectoral guidance from many countries, available in all languages**
- **Dedicated web section <https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/covid-19-resources-workplace>**
- **Awareness-raising video “Napo in...stop the pandemic”**  
<https://youtu.be/x9NOUr0ItNA>
  
- **Powerpoint presentation by the EU Commission**
- **Resources from EU and international organisations**
  - European Commission: [Guidelines for the protection of seasonal workers](#) ; [Factsheet on the protection of seasonal workers](#)
  - European Commission: [webpage on Covid-19](#)
  - European Commission: [data portal for researchers](#)
  - [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control \(ECDC\)](#)
  - [COVID-19 EU PolicyWatch](#) by Eurofound
  - [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#)
  - [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

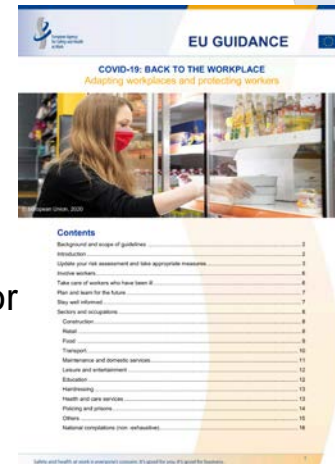
## Napo in... Stop the pandemic





# Covid-19 – guidance

- **Applicable legislation: Biological agents Directive**
- **Update of risk assessment and taking appropriate measures!**
  - Considering all risks, including mental health
- **Hierarchy of control measures**
  - **Technical measures:**
    - Reorganising work processes
    - Reducing physical contact between workers
    - Barrier between workers
  - **Organisational measures:**
    - Avoiding excessive workload, carrying out only essential work
    - Eliminating/limiting physical interaction with/between customers
    - Delivering goods through pick-up or delivery outside the premises
    - If close contact unavoidable, keep it to less than 15 minutes
    - Policies for flexible leave and remote working
    - Encouraging individual rather than collective transport, e.g. car parking or place for storing bicycles securely, encouraging workers to walk to work.



# Covid-19 guidance

## Hygiene measures:

- Washing facilities, soap, alcohol rubs, paper towels
- Procedures for waste – waste bins
- Cleaning premises (counters, door handles, tools)
- Organising meal breaks - reduce the number of people sharing a cafeteria, staff room, or kitchen.
- Only one worker at a time in bathrooms and changing rooms
- Staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette
- Hand hygiene at the entrance to the workplace and in other areas

## Information and consultation of workers

- Understand workers' concerns, provide information about measures taken and available support
- Guidance and training on changes to work procedures and special measures – consider written instructions
- Consultation of workers/representatives on the measures
- Include agency workers, cleaners and contractors

## ➤ Making use of occupational health services and health and safety advisor!



# Covid-19 and the provisions of the biological agents Directive

## ▪ Personal protective measures

- PPE are a last measure!
- Providing appropriate PPE, surgical masks are not PPE, but medical devices
- PPE free of charge
- Consider provider information and applicable standards
- PPE often cause additional physical load – breaks!
- Replacement and storage of PPE and work clothing

## ▪ Hygiene and individual protection where there is a risk from exposure to biological agents

- appropriate protective clothing or other appropriate special clothing
- protective equipment
  - properly stored in a well-defined place
  - checked and cleaned if possible before, and in any case after, each use
  - repaired, where defective, or replaced before further use
- Working clothes and protective equipment removed on leaving the working area and kept separately from other clothing (black/white areas)
- The employer must ensure that such clothing and protective equipment is decontaminated and cleaned or, if necessary, destroyed



©Brenda Salinas



©EU OSHA/Jim Holmes

# Covid-19 – training of workers

- **Information and training of workers**
  - sufficient and appropriate training in the form of information and instructions, concerning:
    - potential risks to health
    - precautions to be taken to prevent exposure
    - hygiene requirements
    - **wearing and use of protective equipment and clothing**
    - steps to be taken by workers in the case of incidents and to prevent incidents.
- **The training shall be:**
  - at the beginning of work involving contact with biological agents
  - adapted to take account of new or changed risks
  - repeated periodically if necessary.



# Further issues

- **Fit-testing of respiratory protective equipment, in particular masks**
- **PPE that fits women**
  - Many work clothes and equipment have been designed for the 'average man', protective equipment causing problems for many women and 'non-average' men
- **Other PPE than respiratory protective equipment and masks, e.g. for the use of chemicals and pharmaceuticals**
  - Gloves for the use of chemicals
- **External or subcontracted services, e.g. cleaning or waste disposal**
  - Provision of appropriate PPE
  - Workers providing services at different locations or client's premises



**Thank you...**

**Any questions?**