

Council Directive of 29 May 1990 on the minimum health and safety requirements for the manual handling of loads where there is a risk particularly of back injury to workers (fourth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16 (1) of Directive 89/391/EEC) (90/269/EEC)

COUNCIL DIRECTIVE

of 29 May 1990

on the minimum health and safety requirements for the manual handling of loads where there is a risk particularly of back injury to workers (fourth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16 (1) of Directive 89/391/EEC)

(90/269/EEC)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Article 118a thereof

Having regard to the Commission proposal<sup>(1)</sup> submitted after consultation with the Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at Work,

In cooperation with the European Parliament<sup>(2)</sup>,

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee<sup>(3)</sup>,

Whereas Article 118a of the Treaty provides that the Council shall adopt, by means of Directives, minimum requirements for encouraging improvements, especially in the working environment, to guarantee a better level of protection of the health and safety of workers;

Whereas, pursuant to that Article, such Directives must avoid imposing administrative, financial and legal constraints in a way which would hold back the creation and development of small and medium-sized undertakings;

Whereas the Commission communication on its programme concerning safety, hygiene and health at work<sup>(4)</sup>, provides for the adoption of Directives designed to guarantee the health and safety of workers at the workplace;

Whereas the Council, in its resolution of 21 December 1987 on safety, hygiene and health at work<sup>(5)</sup>, took note of the Commission's intention of submitting to the Council in the near future a Directive on protection against the risks resulting from the manual handling of heavy loads;

Whereas compliance with the minimum requirements designed to guarantee a better standard of health and safety at the workplace is essential to ensure the health and safety of workers;

Whereas this Directive is an individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16 (1) of Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the health and safety of workers at work<sup>(6)</sup>; whereas therefore the provisions of the said Directive are fully applicable to the field of the manual handling of loads where there is

---

*Status: EU Directives are being published on this site to aid cross referencing from UK legislation. After IP completion day (31 December 2020 11pm) no further amendments will be applied to this version.*

---

a risk particularly of back injury to workers, without prejudice to more stringent and /or specific provisions set out in this Directive;

Whereas this Directive constitutes a practical step towards the achievement of the social dimension of the internal market;

Whereas, pursuant to Decision 74/325/EEC<sup>(7)</sup>, the Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at Work shall be consulted by the Commission with a view to drawing up proposals in this field,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE:

## SECTION I

### GENERAL PROVISIONS

#### *Article 1*

##### **Subject**

1 This Directive, which is the fourth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16 (1) of Directive 89/391/EEC, lays down minimum health and safety requirements for the manual handling of loads where there is a risk particularly of back injury to workers.

2 The provisions of Directive 89/391 /EEC shall be fully applicable to the whole sphere referred to in paragraph 1, without prejudice to more [<sup>X1</sup>stringent] and/or specific provisions contained in this Directive.

#### **Editorial Information**

**X1** Substituted by [Corrigendum to Directive 90/269/EEC of 29 May 1990 on the minimum health and safety requirements for the manual handling of loads where there is a risk particularly of back injury to workers \(fourth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16 \(1\) of Directive 89/391/EEC\)](#) (Official Journal of the European Communities No L 156 of 21 June 1990).

#### *Article 2*

##### **Definition**

For the purposes of this Directives, ‘manual handling of loads’ means any transporting or supporting of a load, by one or more workers, including lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving of a load, which, by reason of its characteristics or of unfavourable ergonomic conditions, involves a risk particularly of back injury to workers.

## SECTION II

### EMPLOYERS' OBLIGATIONS

#### *Article 3*

##### **General provision**

1 The employer shall take appropriate organizational measures, or shall use the appropriate means, in particular mechanical equipment, in order to avoid the need for the manual handling of loads by workers.

2 Where the need for the manual handling of loads by workers cannot be avoided, the employer shall take the appropriate organizational measures, use the appropriate means or provide workers with such means in order to reduce the risk involved in the manual handling of such loads, having regard to Annex I.

#### *Article 4*

##### **Organization of workstations**

Wherever the need for manual handling of loads by workers cannot be avoided, the employer shall organize workstations in such a way as to make such handling as safe and healthy as possible and:

- (a) assess, in advance if possible, the health and safety conditions of the type of work involved, and in particular examine the characteristics of loads, taking account of Annex I;
- (b) take care to avoid or reduce the risk particularly of back injury to workers, by taking appropriate measures, considering in particular the characteristics of the working environment and the requirements of the activity, taking account of Annex I.

#### *Article 5*

##### **Reference to Annex II**

For the implementation of Article 6 (3) (b) and Articles 14 and 15 of Directive 89/391 / EEC, account should be taken of Annex II.

#### *Article 6*

##### **Information for, and training of, workers**

1 Without prejudice to Article 10 of Directive 89/391/EEC, workers and/or their representatives shall be informed of all measures to be implemented, pursuant to this Directive, with regard to the protection of safety and of health.

Employers must ensure that workers and/or their representatives receive general indications and, where possible, precise information on:

- the weight of a load,
- the centre of gravity of the heaviest side when a package is eccentrically loaded.

---

*Status: EU Directives are being published on this site to aid cross referencing from UK legislation. After IP completion day (31 December 2020 11pm) no further amendments will be applied to this version.*

---

2 Without prejudice to Article 12 of Directive 83/391 /EEC, employers must ensure that workers receive in addition proper training and information on how to handle loads correctly and the risks they might be open to particularly if these tasks are not performed correctly, having regard to Annexes I and II.

#### *Article 7*

### **Consultation of workers and workers' participation**

Consultation and participation of workers and/or of their representatives shall take place in accordance with Article 11 of Directive 89/391/EEC on matters covered by this Directive, including the Annexes thereto.

## SECTION III

### MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

#### *[<sup>F1</sup>Article 8*

### **Amendments to the Annexes**

The Commission is empowered to adopt delegated acts in accordance with Article 8a to make strictly technical amendments to the Annexes, in order to take account of technical progress, changes in international regulations or specifications and knowledge in the field of the manual handling of loads.

Where, in duly justified and exceptional cases involving imminent, direct and serious risks to workers' and other persons' physical health and safety, imperative grounds of urgency require action in a very short timeframe, the procedure provided for in Article 8b shall apply to delegated acts adopted pursuant to this Article.]

#### **Textual Amendments**

- F1** Substituted by [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1243 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 adapting a number of legal acts providing for the use of the regulatory procedure with scrutiny to Articles 290 and 291 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union \(Text with EEA relevance\)](#).

#### *[<sup>F2</sup>Article 8a*

### **Exercise of the delegation**

1 The power to adopt delegated acts is conferred on the Commission subject to the conditions laid down in this Article.

2 The power to adopt delegated acts referred to in Article 8 shall be conferred on the Commission for a period of five years from 26 July 2019. The Commission shall draw up a report in respect of the delegation of power not later than nine months before the end of the five-year period. The delegation of power shall be tacitly extended for periods of an identical

duration, unless the European Parliament or the Council opposes such extension not later than three months before the end of each period.

3 The delegation of power referred to in Article 8 may be revoked at any time by the European Parliament or by the Council. A decision to revoke shall put an end to the delegation of the power specified in that decision. It shall take effect the day following the publication of the decision in the *Official Journal of the European Union* or at a later date specified therein. It shall not affect the validity of any delegated acts already in force.

4 Before adopting a delegated act, the Commission shall consult experts designated by each Member State in accordance with the principles laid down in the Interinstitutional Agreement of 13 April 2016 on Better Law-Making<sup>(8)</sup>.

5 As soon as it adopts a delegated act, the Commission shall notify it simultaneously to the European Parliament and to the Council.

6 A delegated act adopted pursuant to Article 8 shall enter into force only if no objection has been expressed either by the European Parliament or the Council within a period of two months of notification of that act to the European Parliament and the Council or if, before the expiry of that period, the European Parliament and the Council have both informed the Commission that they will not object. That period shall be extended by two months at the initiative of the European Parliament or of the Council.

---

#### **Textual Amendments**

- F2** Inserted by [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1243 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 adapting a number of legal acts providing for the use of the regulatory procedure with scrutiny to Articles 290 and 291 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union \(Text with EEA relevance\)](#).

### *Article 8b*

#### **Urgency procedure**

1 Delegated acts adopted under this Article shall enter into force without delay and shall apply as long as no objection is expressed in accordance with paragraph 2. The notification of a delegated act to the European Parliament and the Council shall state the reasons for the use of the urgency procedure.

2 Either the European Parliament or the Council may object to a delegated act in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 8a(6). In such a case, the Commission shall repeal the act immediately following the notification of the decision to object by the European Parliament or by the Council.]

---

#### **Textual Amendments**

- F2** Inserted by [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1243 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 adapting a number of legal acts providing for the use of the regulatory procedure with scrutiny to Articles 290 and 291 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union \(Text with EEA relevance\)](#).

---

*Status: EU Directives are being published on this site to aid cross referencing from UK legislation. After IP completion day (31 December 2020 11pm) no further amendments will be applied to this version.*

---

### *Article 9*

#### **Final provisions**

1 Member States shall bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions needed to comply with this Directive not later than 31 December 1992.

They shall forthwith inform the Commission thereof.

2 Member States shall communicate to the Commission the text of the provisions of national law which they adopt, or have adopted, in the field covered by this Directive.

F<sup>3</sup><sub>3</sub> .....

F<sup>3</sup><sub>4</sub> .....

#### **Textual Amendments**

**F3** Deleted by [Directive 2007/30/EC](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2007 amending [Council Directive 89/391/EEC](#), its individual Directives and [Council Directives 83/477/EEC](#), [91/383/EEC](#), [92/29/EEC](#) and [94/33/EC](#) with a view to simplifying and rationalising the reports on practical implementation (Text with EEA relevance).

### *Article 10*

This Directive is addressed to the Member States.

ANNEX I<sup>(9)</sup>

## REFERENCE FACTORS

(Article 3 (2), Article 4 (a) and (b) and Article 6 (2))

## 1. Characteristics of the load

The manual handling of a load may present a risk particularly of back injury if it is:

- too heavy or too large,
- unwieldy or difficult to grasp,
- unstable or has contents likely to shift,
- positioned in a manner requiring it to be held or manipulated at a distance from the trunk, or with a bending or twisting of the trunk,
- likely, because of its contours and/or consistency, to result in injury to workers, particularly in the event of a collision.

## 2. Physical effort required

A physical effort may present a risk particularly of back injury if it is:

- too strenuous,
- only achieved by a twisting movement of the trunk,
- likely to result in a sudden movement of the load,
- made with the body in an unstable posture.

## 3. Characteristics of the working environment

The characteristics of the work environment may increase a risk particularly of back injury if:

- there is not enough room, in particular vertically, to carry out the activity,
- the floor is uneven, thus presenting tripping hazards, or is slippery in relation to the worker's footwear,
- the place of work or the working environment prevents the handling of loads at a safe height or with good posture by the worker,
- there are variations in the level of the floor or the working surface, requiring the load to be manipulated on different levels,
- the floor or foot rest is unstable,
- the temperature, humidity or ventilation is unsuitable.

## 4. Requirements of the activity

The activity may present a risk particularly of back injury if it entails one or more of the following requirements:

- over-frequent or over-prolonged physical effort involving in particular the spine,
- an insufficient bodily rest or recovery period,
- excessive lifting, lowering or carrying distances,
- a rate of work imposed by a process which cannot be altered by the worker.

---

*Status: EU Directives are being published on this site to aid cross referencing from UK legislation. After IP completion day (31 December 2020 11pm) no further amendments will be applied to this version.*

---

## ANNEX II<sup>(10)</sup>

### INDIVIDUAL RISK FACTORS (Articles 5 and 6 (2))

The worker may be at risk if he/she:

- is physically unsuited to carry out the task in question,
- is wearing unsuitable clothing, footwear or other personal effects,
- does not have adequate or appropriate knowledge or training.



---

**Status:** EU Directives are being published on this site to aid cross referencing from UK legislation. After IP completion day (31 December 2020 11pm) no further amendments will be applied to this version.

---

- (1) [OJ No C 117, 4.5.1988, p. 8.](#)
- (2) [OJ No C 326, 19.12.1988, p. 137](#) and [OJ No C 96, 17.4.1990, p. 82.](#)
- (3) [OJ No C 318, 12.12.1988, p. 37.](#)
- (4) [OJ No C 28, 3.2.1988, p. 3.](#)
- (5) [OJ No C 28, 3.2.1988, p. 1.](#)
- (6) [OJ No L 183, 29.6.1983, p. 1.](#)
- (7) [OJ No L 185, 9.7.1974, p. 15.](#)
- (8) [<sup>F2</sup>[OJ L 123, 12.5.2016, p. 1.](#)]
- (9) With a view to making a multi-factor analysis, reference may be made simultaneously to the various factors listed in Annexes I and II.
- (10) With a view to multi-factor analysis, reference may be made simultaneously to the various factors listed in Annexes I and II.

---

#### **Textual Amendments**

- F2** Inserted by [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1243](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 adapting a number of legal acts providing for the use of the regulatory procedure with scrutiny to Articles 290 and 291 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Text with EEA relevance).