

## REPORT

for the period 1 June 2010 to 31 May 2015, made by the **Government of Finland**, in accordance with article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation, on the measures taken to give effect to the provisions of the

### **Benzene Convention, 1971, No. 136**

ratification of which was registered on 13 January 1976.

#### **Direct request 2010**

##### **1. Article 6, paragraph 3. Measurement of concentration of benzene.**

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health has compiled statistics on benzene exposure measurements between 2008-2011. A total of 248 air samples were collected from workplaces representing different sectors, the average benzene concentration in the samples being 0,27 mg/m<sup>3</sup>. The highest measured concentration was 14 mg/m<sup>3</sup> and the lowest was 0,0002 mg/m<sup>3</sup>. The limit value for benzene (3,25mg/m<sup>3</sup>) was exceeded in five samples. These samples were collected from two workplaces in situations that do not represent the conventional, daily processing work of the said workplaces. One case involved a shutdown of a chemical production plant (four samples) and another burning diesel in an extinguishing test (one sample). In normal situations the limit value for benzene has not been exceeded in the said workplaces.

In 2008-2014, 1,198 biological samples (assaying muconic acid in urine) of workers were analysed at the Institute of Occupational Health. Samples exceeding the threshold limit value ceiling of the Institute of Occupational Health (14 µmol/l) were given by 21 people, who mainly work on installation, service, maintenance and production duties in oil refinery and steel industries. The samples exceeding the threshold limit value ceiling were mainly related to leaks or other special situations. There were no samples collected during ordinary work weeks that would have exceeded the threshold limit value ceiling. There are no limit values for biological samples set for benzene exposure.

##### **2. Article 9. Medical examination of workers**

The need for occupational hygienists is recognised. A working group of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has proposed in 2013 that the training of occupational hygienists (a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science degrees) are continued in University of Eastern Finland. The adequacy of the training must be assessed. The current estimation of the annual need for graduating occupational hygienists is approximately 20 in the coming years. The funding for education leading to a qualification is part of the universities' basic funding.

The same working group has also addressed the training needs of the licensed physicians in occupational health care. In order the adequate number of licensed physicians can be ensured, the working group has prepared a Government proposal amending the Act on the operation and funding of the Institute of Occupational Health for the years 2014-2017, so that it has been possible to continue the funding for training licensed physicians for occupational health care with separate funding like in the earlier model. The whole system of training specialised physicians is being renewed, so the continuation of separate funding after 2017 is still open.

### **3. Part IV of the report form. Application in practice.**

In 2012, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health's Register of workers exposed to hazardous carcinogenic substances received reports on a total of 1,675 workers exposed to benzene (1,557 men and 118 women). The most common occupations of these workers exposed to benzene were motor vehicle mechanic or repairperson (218 workers), plastic products industry process operator (155 workers), aircraft mechanic or repairperson (140 workers), agricultural and industrial machine mechanic or repairperson (121 workers), and oil or gas refinery process operator (115 workers). The number of reports concerning exposure to benzene has varied between 1,400 and 1,700.

Occupational safety and health authorities do not have information on problems observed in connection with occupational safety and health inspections as far as compliance with the Convention is concerned.

### **4. Part V of the report form. Observations of SAK**

The Act on the register for workers at risk of exposure to carcinogenic substances and processes (717/2001) contains provisions on the employers' obligations to submit information on the exposed workers to a register maintained by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. As for benzene, information from the reporting period has been given in connection with question 3. (Part IV of the report form. Application in practice). In addition, The Institute of Occupational Health collects information on the workers exposure using both air measurements and biomonitoring samples, like discussed in question 1 (Article 6(3)). Measurement of concentration of benzene).

Based on the number of workers reported to the ASA register and on the measurement data, exposure to benzene has remained at approximately the same level than during the previous reporting period. For this part, there is still room for development in preventive procedures such as information, worker induction and training.

## **I Legislation and regulations**

Nothing new to report

## **II**

### **Articles 1-5**

Nothing new to report

### **Article 6**

See Direct request 1.

### **Articles 7-8**

Nothing new to report

### **Article 9**

See Direct request 2.

### **Articles 10-14**

Nothing new to report

### **III-V**

See Direct requests 3. and 4.

### **VI**

A copy of this report has been sent to the following labour market organisations

1. The Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK)
2. The Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK)
3. The Finnish Confederation of Professionals (STTK)
4. The Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland (AKAVA)
5. The Commission for Local Authority Employers (KT)
6. The State Employer's Office (VTML)
7. The Federation of Finnish enterprises

Statements of the labour market organisations:

#### **Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions**

SAK refers to its earlier statement from 2010. In 2012, 1,674 workers from different occupation groups exposed to benzene have been reported to the register for workers at risk of exposure to carcinogenic substances and processes (ASA register). The number has not decreased over the past decade.

SAK still wants to draw attention to the fact that worker exposure is not comprehensively assessed at workplaces. The small numbers of both occupational hygienic measurements done at workplace and biological monitoring of workers point towards this. In this context, SAK would like to point out that 2000-3000 workers in the supply chain of motor fuel containing benzene and circa 8000 workers in service stations can occasionally be exposed to benzene.

There is a binding limit value for benzene concentration in workplace air. If the concentrations are not measured, there is no certainty whether the limit values are exceeded in some work duties.