

C161 - Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161)
Convention concerning Occupational Health Services
(Entry into force: 17 Feb 1988) Adoption: Geneva, 71st ILC session
(25 Jun 1985)

Preamble

The General Conference of the International Labour Organisation,

Having been convened at Geneva by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and having met in its Seventy-first Session on 7 June 1985, and

Noting that the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment is one of the tasks assigned to the International Labour Organisation under its Constitution,

Noting the relevant international labour Conventions and Recommendations, and in particular the Protection of Workers' Health Recommendation, 1953, the Occupational Health Services Recommendation, 1959, the Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971, and the Occupational Safety and Health Convention and Recommendation, 1981, which establish the principles of national policy and action at the national level,

Having decided upon the adoption of certain proposals with regard to occupational health services, which is the fourth item on the agenda of the session, and

Having determined that these proposals shall take the form of an international Convention;

adopts this twenty-sixth day of June of the year one thousand nine hundred and eighty-five the following Convention, which may be cited as the Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985:

PART I. PRINCIPLES OF NATIONAL POLICY

Article 1

For the purpose of this Convention-

- (a) the term **occupational health services** means services entrusted with essentially preventive functions and responsible for advising the employer, the workers and their representatives in the undertaking on-
 - (i) the requirements for establishing and maintaining a safe and healthy working environment which will facilitate optimal physical and mental health in relation to work;
 - (ii) the adaptation of work to the capabilities of workers in the light of their state of physical and mental health;

- (b) the term ***workers' representatives in the undertaking*** means persons who are recognised as such under national law or practice.

Article 2

In the light of national conditions and practice and in consultation with the most representative organisations of employers and workers, where they exist, each Member shall formulate, implement and periodically review a coherent national policy on occupational health services.

Article 3

- 1. Each Member undertakes to develop progressively occupational health services for all workers, including those in the public sector and the members of production co-operatives, in all branches of economic activity and all undertakings. The provision made should be adequate and appropriate to the specific risks of the undertakings.
- 2. If occupational health services cannot be immediately established for all undertakings, each Member concerned shall draw up plans for the establishment of such services in consultation with the most representative organisations of employers and workers, where they exist.
- 3. Each Member concerned shall indicate, in the first report on the application of the Convention submitted under article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation, the plans drawn up pursuant to paragraph 2 of this Article, and indicate in subsequent reports any progress in their application.

Article 4

The competent authority shall consult the most representative organisations of employers and workers, where they exist, on the measures to be taken to give effect to the provisions of this Convention.

PART II. FUNCTIONS

Article 5

Without prejudice to the responsibility of each employer for the health and safety of the workers in his employment, and with due regard to the necessity for the workers to participate in matters of occupational health and safety, occupational health services shall have such of the following functions as are adequate and appropriate to the occupational risks of the undertaking:

- (a) identification and assessment of the risks from health hazards in the workplace;
- (b) surveillance of the factors in the working environment and working practices which may affect workers' health, including sanitary installations, canteens and housing where these facilities are provided by the employer;
- (c) advice on planning and organisation of work, including the design of workplaces, on the choice, maintenance and condition of machinery and other equipment and on substances used in work;

- (d) participation in the development of programmes for the improvement of working practices as well as testing and evaluation of health aspects of new equipment;
- (e) advice on occupational health, safety and hygiene and on ergonomics and individual and collective protective equipment;
- (f) surveillance of workers' health in relation to work;
- (g) promoting the adaptation of work to the worker;
- (h) contribution to measures of vocational rehabilitation;
- (i) collaboration in providing information, training and education in the fields of occupational health and hygiene and ergonomics;
- (j) organising of first aid and emergency treatment;
- (k) participation in analysis of occupational accidents and occupational diseases.

PART III. ORGANISATION

Article 6

Provision shall be made for the establishment of occupational health services-

- (a) by laws or regulations; or
- (b) by collective agreements or as otherwise agreed upon by the employers and workers concerned; or
- (c) in any other manner approved by the competent authority after consultation with the representative organisations of employers and workers concerned.

Article 7

- 1. Occupational health services may be organised as a service for a single undertaking or as a service common to a number of undertakings, as appropriate.
- 2. In accordance with national conditions and practice, occupational health services may be organised by-
 - (a) the undertakings or groups of undertakings concerned;
 - (b) public authorities or official services;
 - (c) social security institutions;
 - (d) any other bodies authorised by the competent authority;
 - (e) a combination of any of the above.

Article 8

The employer, the workers and their representatives, where they exist, shall cooperate and participate in the implementation of the organisational and other measures relating to occupational health services on an equitable basis.

PART IV. CONDITIONS OF OPERATION

Article 9

- 1. In accordance with national law and practice, occupational health services should be multidisciplinary. The composition of the personnel shall be determined by the nature of the duties to be performed.
- 2. Occupational health services shall carry out their functions in co-operation with the other services in the undertaking.
- 3. Measures shall be taken, in accordance with national law and practice, to ensure adequate co-operation and co-ordination between occupational health services and, as appropriate, other bodies concerned with the provision of health services.

Article 10

The personnel providing occupational health services shall enjoy full professional independence from employers, workers, and their representatives, where they exist, in relation to the functions listed in Article 5.

Article 11

The competent authority shall determine the qualifications required for the personnel providing occupational health services, according to the nature of the duties to be performed and in accordance with national law and practice.

Article 12

The surveillance of workers' health in relation to work shall involve no loss of earnings for them, shall be free of charge and shall take place as far as possible during working hours.

Article 13

All workers shall be informed of health hazards involved in their work.

Article 14

Occupational health services shall be informed by the employer and workers of any known factors and any suspected factors in the working environment which may affect the workers' health.

Article 15

Occupational health services shall be informed of occurrences of ill health amongst workers and absence from work for health reasons, in order to be able to identify whether there is any relation between the reasons for ill health or absence and any health hazards which may be present at the workplace. Personnel providing occupational health services shall not be required by the employer to verify the reasons for absence from work.

PART V. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 16

National laws or regulations shall designate the authority or authorities responsible both for supervising the operation of and for advising occupational health services once they have been established.

Article 17

The formal ratifications of this Convention shall be communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for registration.

Article 18

- 1. This Convention shall be binding only upon those Members of the International Labour Organisation whose ratifications have been registered with the Director-General.
- 2. It shall come into force twelve months after the date on which the ratifications of two Members have been registered with the Director-General.
- 3. Thereafter, this Convention shall come into force for any Member twelve months after the date on which its ratification has been registered.

Article 19

- 1. A Member which has ratified this Convention may denounce it after the expiration of ten years from the date on which the Convention first comes into force, by an act communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for registration. Such denunciation shall not take effect until one year after the date on which it is registered.
- 2. Each Member which has ratified this Convention and which does not, within the year following the expiration of the period of ten years mentioned in the preceding paragraph, exercise the right of denunciation provided for in this Article, will be bound for another period of ten years and, thereafter, may denounce this Convention at the expiration of each period of ten years under the terms provided for in this Article.

Article 20

- 1. The Director-General of the International Labour Office shall notify all Members of the International Labour Organisation of the registration of all ratifications and denunciations communicated to him by the Members of the Organisation.
- 2. When notifying the Members of the Organisation of the registration of the second ratification communicated to him, the Director-General shall draw the attention of the Members of the Organisation to the date upon which the Convention will come into force.

Article 21

The Director-General of the International Labour Office shall communicate to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for registration in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations full particulars of all ratifications and acts of denunciation registered by him in accordance with the provisions of the preceding Articles.

Article 22

At such times as it may consider necessary the Governing Body of the International Labour Office shall present to the General Conference a report on the working of this Convention and shall examine the desirability of placing on the agenda of the Conference the question of its revision in whole or in part.

Article 23

- 1. Should the Conference adopt a new Convention revising this Convention in whole or in part, then, unless the new Convention otherwise provides-
 - (a) the ratification by a Member of the new revising Convention shall ipso jure involve the immediate denunciation of this Convention, notwithstanding the provisions of Article 19 above, if and when the new revising Convention shall have come into force;
 - (b) as from the date when the new revising Convention comes into force this Convention shall cease to be open to ratification by the Members.
- 2. This Convention shall in any case remain in force in its actual form and content for those Members which have ratified it but have not ratified the revising Convention.

Article 24

The English and French versions of the text of this Convention are equally authoritative.