

FtLb1D: Footwear Labelling Directive (Directive 94/11/EC), explained

The Footwear Labelling Directive requires footwear sold to EU consumers to carry a label showing the material of the upper, lining and sock and outer sole, with the manufacturer, its EU agent or the first importer responsible and retailers selling only labelled footwear. It has applied since 23 March 1996; since 16 July 2021 market surveillance follows Regulation (EU) 2019/1020.

Reviewed 24 September 2026 by Conphora compliance team · Next review 12 March 2027 · Not legal advice

Key facts

Reference	Directive 94/11/EC	Act type	Directive
In force	9 May 1994	Applies from	23 March 1996
Amended by	Act concerning the conditions of accession of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia (OJ L 236, 23 September 2003), Council Directive 2006/96/EC, Council Directive 2013/15/EU	Enforced by	National market surveillance authorities enforce the national laws transposing the directive, which Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 lists in Annex I (point 8) as Union harmonisation legislation; in Denmark the control authority under § 9 of the product and market surveillance act (lovbekendtgørelse nr. 22 af 8. januar 2026, which lists the directive in § 2, stk. 1, nr. 21) is Erhvervsstyrelsen, whose department Markedsovervågning is the former Sikkerhedsstyrelsen, part of Erhvervsstyrelsen since January 2026, applying executive order nr. 1046 af 28. maj 2021 on footwear and textile labelling.

Key dates

23 March 1994	Directive 94/11/EC adopted by the European Parliament and the Council	title block
19 April 1994	Published in the Official Journal, OJ L 100, p. 37	header (OJ reference)
9 May 1994	Entry into force according to the EUR-Lex document information; the directive has no entry-into-force article of its own	document information, date of entry into force
23 September 1995	Deadline for Member States to adopt and publish the transposing laws, regulations and administrative provisions and to inform the Commission	Art. 6(1)
23 March 1996	Member States apply the labelling measures (date as corrected by the corrigendum of 24 February 1996)	Art. 6(2) and corrigendum C1

23 September 1997	End of the derogation for stock invoiced or delivered to the retailer before 23 March 1996	Art. 6(2)
1 May 2004	2003 Act of Accession adds the Czech, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Hungarian, Maltese, Polish, Slovenian and Slovak written indications to Annex I	document information, amending act 12003TN02/01/F; consolidated text, Annex I (mark
1 January 2007	Council Directive 2006/96/EC applies: Bulgarian and Romanian written indications added to Annex I	Art. 2, Art. 3 and Annex, Part D, point 1
1 July 2013	Council Directive 2013/15/EU applies: Croatian written indications added to Annex I	Art. 2, Art. 3 and Annex, Part B
1 July 2021	Denmark: executive order nr. 1046 af 28. maj 2021 on footwear and textile labelling in force,	§ 20

replacing
order nr. 759
af 15.
september
1995

16 July 2021

Regulation (EU)
2019/1020
applies; the
directive is
listed in its
Annex I (point
8) and Annex
II (point 7)

Art. 44, Annex I and Annex II

Obligations by role

Manufacturer (including brand owners)

- Identify the three parts to be labelled using the Annex I definitions: the upper is the outer face of the structural element attached to the outer sole; the lining and sock are the lining of the upper and the insole, constituting the inside of the footwear; the outer sole is the bottom part subjected to abrasive wear and attached to the upper. Art. 1(2)(i) and Annex I, point 1
- Classify the material of each part as leather, coated leather, textile or other materials using the Annex I definitions: leather is hide or skin with its original fibrous structure more or less intact, tanned to be rot-proof, with any surface coating or glued-on finish not thicker than 0,15 mm; coated leather has a coating thicker than 0,15 mm but not exceeding one third of the total thickness; hide disintegrated into fibres, pieces or powder and re-formed into sheets is not leather. Annex I, point 2
- Apply the 80 % rule: label the material that makes up at least 80 % of the surface area of the upper and of the lining and sock, and at least 80 % of the volume of the outer sole; where no material reaches 80 %, give the two main materials. Leave accessories and reinforcements such as ankle patches, edging, ornamentation, buckles, tabs and eyelet stays out of the classification of the upper.
Art. 1(2)(iii), Art. 1(2)(iv) and Art. 4(1)
- Choose either the Annex I pictograms or written indications in at least the language or languages which the Member State of consumption may determine in accordance with the Treaty; the Danish indications in Annex I are Overdel, Foring og bindsål and Ydersål for the parts and Læder, Overtrukket læder, Tekstilmaterialer and Andre materialer for the material groups, and the Danish order accepts pictograms or text in Danish. Art. 4(2) and Annex I; § 4, stk. 2
- Affix the information to at least one article of footwear in each pair by printing, sticking, embossing or an attached label, so that it is visible, securely attached and accessible, with pictograms large enough to make the information easy to understand, and never in a way that could mislead the consumer.
Art. 4(3) and Art. 4(4)
- Supply the label and answer for the accuracy of the information it contains; this responsibility sits with you or with your authorised agent established in the Community and passes to the first importer only if neither of you is established there. Art. 4(5)
- Add further textual information only alongside the required information, and use the term full grain leather only for leather bearing the original grain surface as exposed by removal of the epidermis, with none of the surface removed by buffing, snuffing or splitting. Art. 5 and Annex I, point 2(a)(i)
- In Denmark, label the footwear in accordance with §§ 4 to 6 of executive order nr. 1046 af 28. maj 2021 before placing it on the market; an importer or retailer that markets footwear under its own name or trade mark is treated as the manufacturer and takes over these duties. § 7 and § 15
- In Denmark, label the footwear in accordance with §§ 4 to 6 of executive order nr. 1046 af 28. maj 2021 before placing it on the market. § 7

Authorised agent (authorised representative) established in the Union

- Where the manufacturer has appointed you as its authorised agent established in the Community, you may make the choice between the Annex I pictograms and written indications in at least the language or languages which the Member State of consumption may determine in accordance with the Treaty.

Art. 4(2)

- You share the manufacturer's responsibility for supplying the label and for the accuracy of the information it contains; only where neither of you is established in the Community does that duty pass to the person first placing the footwear on the Community market. Art. 4(5)
- In Denmark, act under a written mandate from the manufacturer, which may cover the labelling duties of §§ 4 to 6 of the executive order, and carry out the tasks the mandate sets out. § 8 and § 9
- Failing to carry out the tasks set out in the mandate is a finable offence in Denmark; the separate offence of not giving the authorised representative a written mandate is committed by the manufacturer, not by you. § 18, nr. 2 and nr. 3

Importer (the person first placing the footwear on the Union market)

- Where neither the manufacturer nor its authorised agent is established in the Community, supply the label and answer for the accuracy of its information as the person responsible for first placing the footwear on the Community market. Art. 4(5)
- Check before placing the footwear on the market that each pair carries the three-part material label in the form (pictograms or words) and language required in the Member State of consumption, on at least one shoe, visible, securely attached and accessible, with pictograms large enough to understand.
Art. 4(2), Art. 4(3) and Art. 4(4)
- In Denmark, ensure that the footwear is labelled in accordance with §§ 4 to 6 of the executive order before you place it on the market, and do not place it on the market if you know or ought to know that it is not, until it has been correctly labelled. § 10 and § 11, stk. 1
- If you learn or ought to know that footwear you have already placed on the market is not correctly labelled, immediately take the measures needed to have it labelled in accordance with §§ 4 to 6 of the order. § 11, stk. 2
- If you place footwear on the market under your own name or trade mark, you are treated as the manufacturer and take over the manufacturer's labelling duties. § 15

Retailer (distributor selling to consumers, in shops or online)

- Sell only footwear that bears the labelling prescribed by the directive; the retailer remains responsible for this even though the manufacturer, its authorised agent or the first importer supplies the label.
Art. 4(5)
- In Denmark, ensure that footwear is labelled in accordance with §§ 4 to 6 of the executive order before you make it available on the market, and if you know or ought to know that it is not, do not make it available until it has been correctly labelled. § 12 and § 14
- Make the label visible and accessible to the consumer before the purchase, in the shop and in the web shop. § 13, stk. 1
- Inform the consumer in writing of the meaning of any pictograms before the purchase, for example with a poster on the wall, information leaflets in the shop or on the sales page where the footwear is added to the basket; the Danish penalty provision is worded for a failure to inform the consumer in writing, so keep the explanation in written form. § 13, stk. 2, og § 18, nr. 9
- If you sell footwear under your own name or trade mark, you are treated as the manufacturer and take over its labelling duties. § 15
- Expect inspections of shops and web shops: Erhvervsstyrelsen's department Markedsovervågning checks footwear labelling in both channels and can order you to correct it, and it is a finable offence to make unlabelled footwear available on the market, to fail to check the labelling before you do so, or to fail to make the label visible or to explain the pictograms before the purchase. § 17 and § 18, nr. 7 to nr. 10

Penalties

The directive itself contains no penalty article: it requires Member States to ensure that all footwear placed on the market meets its labelling requirements and, where footwear not in conformity with those requirements is placed on the market, to take appropriate action as specified in national legislation. Since 16 July 2021 the directive is listed in Annex II of Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 as Union harmonisation legislation without provisions on penalties, so Member States must lay down effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties for infringements of it under Article 41 of that regulation. In Denmark, executive order nr. 1046 af 28. maj 2021 lets the control authority issue orders under § 14 of the product and market surveillance act where footwear is not labelled in accordance with §§ 4 to 6, and § 18 of the order punishes with a fine a manufacturer that fails to label the footwear, an authorised representative without a written mandate or that fails its tasks, an importer or retailer that places or makes available unlabelled footwear or fails to act on it, and a retailer that does not make the label visible or does not explain the pictograms before the purchase; with companies liable under § 19 of the order. The act adds, in § 37(1), a fine for the economic operator that breaches the general duty of § 5 to place only compliant products on the market and for the operator that fails to comply with a decision of the control authority, including an order under § 14(1); because footwear labelling is one of the product areas listed in § 2(1)(21) of the act, the penalty for those offences can rise to imprisonment of up to two years in aggravating circumstances (danger to safety or health, an accident causing serious injury or death, a repeat infringement, or a systematic infringement for economic gain, § 37(2)) and companies can be held liable under § 37(5).

Art. 2; Art. 41 and Annex II, point 7; § 17 to § 19; § 2, stk. 1, nr. 21, § 5, stk. 1, § 14, stk. 1, and § 37, stk. 1, 2 and 5

Checklist

- 1. Confirm the article is footwear with an applied sole for sale to the consumer and that none of the four Article 1(1) exclusions applies: second-hand worn footwear, protective footwear under the PPE rules, footwear covered by the REACH restrictions, toy footwear.
- 2. Decide your role for each model: manufacturer or authorised agent in the Union, first importer, or retailer, remembering that own-brand importers and retailers count as the manufacturer in Denmark (executive order § 15).
- 3. Measure the composition of the upper and of the lining and sock by surface area and of the outer sole by volume, leaving accessories and reinforcements on the upper out of the count (Article 1(2) and Article 4(1)).
- 4. Assign each part to leather, coated leather, textile or other materials using the Annex I definitions, checking any coating against the 0,15 mm and one-third-of-thickness limits.
- 5. Apply the 80 % rule and, where no material reaches it, name the two main materials (Article 4(1)).
- 6. Choose pictograms or written indications in the language of each country of sale; for Denmark, the pictograms or Danish words (Article 4(2), executive order § 4).
- 7. Put the label on at least one shoe of each pair, printed, stuck, embossed or attached, visible, securely attached and accessible, with pictograms large enough to read (Article 4(3) and (4)).
- 8. For stores and web shops, show the label and explain the pictograms in writing before the purchase, since the Danish penalty provision is worded for a failure to inform the consumer in writing, and record who supplies each label so the responsibility for its accuracy is clear (Article 4(5), executive order § 13 and § 18, nr. 9).

Sources

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2. Directive 94/11/EC as published in OJ L 100, 19 April 1994 (EUR-Lex) — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:31994L0011>
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4. Council Directive 2006/96/EC adapting directives in the field of free movement of goods, accession of Bulgaria and Romania (EUR-Lex) — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32006L0096>
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11. Bekendtgørelse af lov om produkter og markedsovervågning, LBK nr. 22 af 8. januar 2026 (Retsinformation) — <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2026/22>
12. Sikkerhedsstyrelsen, en del af Erhvervsstyrelsen (Erhvervsstyrelsen) — <https://erhvervsstyrelsen.dk/sikkerhedsstyrelsen-en-del-af-erhvervsstyrelsen>

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