

TOXICOLOGICAL INFORMATION AND DATA NETWORK - A EUROPEAN CHALLENGE? RESULTS FROM A WORKSHOP, SEPTEMBER 2002, BERLIN

Heinemeyer G¹, Desel H², Tempowski J³. ¹*Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Berlin (BfR), Germany,* ²*Poison Information Centre North, Göttingen, Germany,* ³*International Programme on Chemical Safety (WHO/ILO/UNEP), Geneva, Switzerland*

Objective: Poison information centres require high quality data to give adequate advice. These data include product formulations, data about cases, and general toxicological information. In European states different approaches are taken to gathering this information, particularly product data. In some states the level of information about product composition is good, while in others it is inadequate. The use of electronic means for providing and exchanging information is becoming more widespread. However, although PCs use computers for their daily work, their use to exchange experience and knowledge is poorly developed. Method: To explore the desirability and possibility of improving electronic data exchange in Europe, a workshop "Toxicological Information and Data Network - A European Challenge?" was organised on behalf of the Research Project Toxicological Data and Information Network (TDI). TDI was initiated and supported by the Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and realised by five German PCs, the BgVV, and the German Cosmetics, Toiletries, Perfumes and Detergents Association. Software was developed for electronic transfer from industry to poison centres, and other partners. This project was used as the basis for a discussion about the possible benefits of data exchange between European PCs and agencies involved in risk assessment, health policy and industry. Results: An overview about co-operation between the above mentioned Partners, and potential data needs was given. The approaches used for gathering product information in six different states showed broad heterogeneity. In some countries very strict regulations governed the notification of formulations. At a round table discussion participants agreed that data exchange of information about products, cases and substances was an important task. It was also noted that industry did not want to have multiple partners in different countries but ideally only one partner in Europe. This partner would ensure data would be transferred to others. It was felt that the development of a system for data exchange would be useful and would increase the quality of data. However, there were no common agreed standards for electronic data transmission between the European PCs. EAPCCT has already worked on data formats for products, and it was felt that EAPCCT should support an initiative for implementation of electronic formats. Conclusion: The workshop has clearly shown that there is a high degree of agreement that a co-operative approach is needed, and that EAPCCT as the representative association of poison centres and clinical toxicologists should play a major role in this process. This minisymposium was therefore organised to discuss how a common electronic data exchange format for products could be established which all poison centres can use and which considers all relevant information about products. A proposal for an electronic format and a transfer protocol will be presented and discussed.