

Welcome note by the president of the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) for the Workshop “Occupational Safety and Health during the Use of Biocides” from April 3rd to 4th 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you here at the German Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, also known as BAuA, for the international workshop “Occupational Safety and Health during the Use of Biocides”. My name is Hans-Jürgen Bieneck and I am the president of the BAuA.

One of the questions you will seek an answer for during the following two days is: “How can the Biocidal Product Directive and Occupational Safety and Health benefit from each other?”

The meaning of this question gets obvious if you realise that thirteen Member States of the European Union and representatives of the European Commission are present in this workshop. They all seek for harmonisation of assessment and management of risks at work from the application of biocidal products.

Safety and health at work are not luxuries in times of globalisation and international competition. They are a major factor in ensuring that the European economy will remain competitive in the future and that the social welfare system will be spared additional burdens. To achieve this, admittedly, ambitious goal it is not anymore possible to follow this task on national level only. Harmonisation of standards and rules is necessary in all fields of occupational safety and health. Naturally, notwithstanding the right of single member states to establish a higher level of protection on national level. It is not a coincidence that the BAuA took the initiative for this workshop – it is one of the most valuable of our duties to seek for contact to international colleagues.

Besides that the BAuA is the central institution for occupational safety and health in Germany and as such has duties in all fields of this topic. BAuA – to name only some – mainly performs the following central tasks:

- BAuA supports the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in all questions of occupational safety and health and represents Germany in the according international networks.
- BAuA uses its research and expertise in occupational safety, ergonomics and occupational medicine to develop and establish rules and codes of good practice.
- The German Chemicals Notification Unit and the Biocide Authorisation Unit are based at BAuA, which is one of the reasons why we are meeting in Dortmund today.
- Last but not least, we run the German Occupational Safety and Health Exhibition, the DASA, which you might visit during these days.

Chemicals and the occupational safety and health for handling these substances play a major role within the BAuA.

The Biocide Authorisation Unit – I already mentioned – is responsible for the authorisation of biocidal products. In this process the unit may impose licensing conditions and restrictions to protect man and the environment. Therefore the unit co-operates closely with the federal agencies competent for the different protection goals.

In this co-operation BAuA is involved via its department “Safety and Health regarding Chemical and Biological Agents” which concentrates on the issue of worker protection. Since the foundation of BAuA this department has collected valuable experiences in the assessment of chemical risks. This includes, among others:

- Exposure measurements at the workplace in all kinds of enterprises that deal with chemicals,
- Risk assessment for chemicals in the frameworks of new and existing chemical substances,
- Development of “codes of good practice” for handling hazardous substances and by this an excellent anchorage in German and international committees for chemicals and occupational safety and health,
- Experiences in bans and restrictions for chemicals and risk communication for hazardous substances via classification and labelling and safety data sheets.

Against the background of these experiences a specialised assessment unit for biocidal active substances and products was formed. It is responsible for the exposure estimation at the work place, the occupational risk assessment and the determination of necessary safety measures. Regulatory basis for these measures is the general framework of occupational safety and health as well as the product specific conditions within the authorisation of biocidal products. BAuA is in charge of the management of identified risks by targeted measures like for example classification and labelling, occupational exposure limits or restrictions and bans for biocidal substances from production to disposal.

The biocides assessment unit has gathered some experiences in substance assessment during the last 2 years and has produced some general ideas. As the biocides regulation is an European process it will be workable and effective only if member states have a common understanding. Therefore BAuA wishes to exchange views with the European colleagues and has organised this workshop.

Harmonisation is essential – as I outlined above – for an efficient European process. The requirement is obvious and the right persons are here for this workshop today. Therefore, I wish to thank my colleagues for the organisation of this workshop.

I hope that it will offer motivating discussions, sustainable results and represents a first step on the long journey of harmonisation of risk assessment for biocidal products at the workplace.