

GERMANY

Highlight of developments since the 1st meeting of the WPMN

- As we had reported last time, possible elements of a structured public dialogue about chances and possible risks of nanomaterials and nanoparticles had been discussed last September at a starting conversation between the Federal Minister of Environment and high-level experts of all involved stakeholders. Based on this the “Nanocommission” was established at 24th November 2006. This Commission is thought as a strategic board, which will lead in behalf of the German government the NanoDialogue to chances and risks of synthetic nanoparticles for human health and the environment. Therefore it plans also the development of a special communication strategy.
- Furthermore, the commission will accompany and steer the work of three working groups, which have very recently (at 26th of March) founded under the roof of the Nanocommission.
- The main tasks of these groups are thought to be:
 - WG 1: Chances for the environment and human health,
 - WG 2: Risks and safety research, and
 - WG 3: guide for a responsible handling of nanomaterials
- A close cooperation with the appropriate OECD SG’s is aspired.

Work completed, underway or planned

1. Any national regulatory developments on human health and environmental safety including recommendations or discussions related to adapting existing regulatory systems or the drafting of laws/ regulations/ guidance materials

The study on regulatory gaps and options undertaken by the Federal Environment Agency (UBA), whose start has been mentioned in our first report, had been finished. This study examined European (REACH) and German chemical and environmental legislation. The final report with conclusions and recommendations has been published on the UBA web page.

2. Developments related to voluntary or stewardship schemes

The Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) developed in collaboration with the Chemical Industry Association (VCI) a questionnaire to elucidate exposure of nanomaterials and risk management at workplaces of the chemical industry and research institutions. The feedback from industrial and research companies was evaluated, summarized and will be published soon.

Further progress is in addition expected from the outcome of the NanoDialogue WG’s (see above)

3. Information on any risk assessment decisions

Not applicable due to lack of information

4. Information on any developments related to good practice documents

The Chemical Industry Association (VCI) has developed in collaboration with the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) a handling guideline for the responsible handling of nanomaterials during production and use. The draft was discussed at a work shop to consider further input from a variety of stakeholders. In course of the year the final version is expected.

Further progress is in addition expected from the outcome of the NanoDialogue WG's (see above)

5. Research programmes or strategies designed to address human health and/ or environmental safety aspects of nanomaterials

The joint German research strategy, developed by the BAuA (Federal Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) together with BfR (Federal Institute for Risk Assessment) and UBA (Federal Environment Agency) considering health issues of workers and consumers and the environment issues had been discussed on a one day meeting at November the 30th with stakeholders from industry, science, policy, and NGO's. Under the light of discussion this strategy is under revision and will be provided to OECD WG's. It is also part of the working plan of the German Dialogue WG 2 (see highlights too)

6. Information on any public/ stakeholder consultation

A BfR consumer conference on nanotechnology had been held in November last year. The main demands formulated in the vote by the 16 consumers who attended were for comprehensible labelling, clear definitions, terms and standards as well as far more research into the potential risks before nanotechnology is used to a greater degree in consumer products.

The Consumer Conference on Nanotechnology was launched as a pilot project by the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) and was jointly staged with the Independent Institute for Environmental Concerns (UfU) and the Institute for Ecological Economic Research (IÖW). It draws on the model of the Danish consensus conference and is being tested by BfR as one possible tool of extended risk communication. The backdrop to BfR's risk communication activities is the dialogue between risk assessors, risk managers and various interest groups from science, politics, industry, associations, public agencies and the public at large. The staging of a consumer conference puts BfR's statutory remit on risk communication into practice by directly involving groups of consumers in the discussions about the risks and benefits prior to the introduction of a broadly based consumer application of this technology. This is the first time that a public agency in Germany has used this tool.

16 people of various ages and occupations were extracted from a cohort of 6,000 randomly selected individuals on the basis of sociodemographic criteria for the Consumer Conference on Nanotechnology. This group took a comprehensive look at this subject at two preparatory weekends, prepared questions on various consumer aspects of this technology and selected experts from science, associations, public agencies and industry to answer them.