



**INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON “ACCIDENT/INJURY DATA COLLECTION FOR NON-FOOD PRODUCT AND SERVICE RISK ASSESSMENT”, 20-21 FEBRUARY 2006**

**DRAFT SUCCINCT REPORT AND CONCLUSIONS**

**PLEASE NOTE: this draft document is open to comments by participants of the workshop and interested parties before 31 March 2006. A final version integrating the various comments received will be published in the beginning of April.**

***Description of the Workshop***

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This technical workshop was intended to kick-start a process to improve the EU knowledge base on accident and injuries due to unsafe products and services provided to consumers. Relevant systematic data is needed to design new policies in the area of consumer safety, especially in relation to consumer services and to monitor the effectiveness of product safety legislation and standards in place.

At present, the main tool for data collection at EU level is the EU Injury Data Base (IDB), which is based on national hospital surveillance systems for home and leisure related accidents and injuries. The IDB does not provide sufficient information for designing consumer safety policies. A feasibility study was launched at the end of 2005 to see how the IDB could be improved to better integrate the product and service safety dimension. The results of this study will be available by the end of 2006.

The workshop was truly of international dimension. Participants and speakers came from all over Europe, Japan, Canada and the US. They represented national administrations, international organisations, third countries, industry and professional federations, consumer groups, and other organisations with an interest in consumer safety.

The main objective of the workshop, which was the first of its kind organised by the European Commission, was to gather all major stakeholders in the field, and to explore with them available data sources for accidents and injuries in relation to product and service safety. Several presentations were given during the workshop to cover all possible ways to collect this type of data (via industry, insurance companies, poison centres, specific associations dealing with safety, fire officers, general practitioners etc.). Successful experiences in the US and Canada were also presented. In addition, many speakers proposed ideas for improvement at EU level. The overall aim was to identify best practices to collect data at EU level and prioritise what could bring concrete results in the short to mid-term.

The outcome of the workshop provides a basis for a work programme, which includes concrete steps and pilot projects.

## *Main issues discussed during the workshop*

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### *Data needs*

The first morning was devoted to review and clarify data needs in light of existing systems at EU level. It was underlined that harmonised data are needed in order to ensure comparability of data within the EU but also at international level. Sufficient details on the type of product involved in the accident and the circumstances in which the accident occurred should be available. As regards consumer services, the local dimension is very important and sources for collecting accident data are often multiple.

It is clearly a challenging task to build up a system producing comparable data with 25 different Member States, new product developments and different market structures. The realistic objective should be to build up a cost-effective, proportionate and result-oriented system responding to the needs of both public authorities and other stakeholders.

During the two days of the workshop, different data collection systems were reviewed and discussed with participants. Interesting sources of data collection, methods of capturing data, as well as concrete recommendations as to the way ahead for developing pan-European data collection systems were provided.

### *International experiences*

- The US system for collecting data on accidents caused by products, the so-called National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS) is well developed. Data are collected on the basis of hospital and emergency departments' reports, which provide detailed information on the product involved in the accident and the circumstances of the accidents. The system is very timely, as data are uploaded in the central system of the Consumer Product Safety Commission on a daily basis and easily accessible to the public via Internet. Telephone investigations are also carried out to complete the information obtained from hospital reports (approx. 3000 cases are further investigated per year). A random sample of hospitals with Emergency rooms participates in the system (in total 96 hospitals). The costs for running such a system represent 2.8 million \$ per year.
- In Canada, two systems are used to collect accident data: one based on complaints from consumers, industry, day care and healthcare professionals, police, fire services and media, called the Product Safety Information System (PSIS) and one hospital-based surveillance system called the Canadian Hospitals Injury Reporting and Prevention Programme (CHIRPP) covering 14 emergency departments (mainly paediatric centres).

### *Thematic/sectoral experiences*

- A European network of poison centres is in place via the European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists (EACCPT) and has the possibility to source data on accidents related to chemical products, pharmaceuticals, detergents etc. It was nevertheless underlined that the structure, nature and funding of poison centres differ from one country to another and that further work needs to be envisaged to collect the same types of data in the future.

- Many speakers highlighted the fact that press clippings can be a useful source of information for certain types of accidents and especially severe injuries and fatal accidents. Many sectors already use them. The example of the German Life Saving Federation recording system of drowning accidents based on press cuttings is very encouraging. Data gathered are very relevant for consumer safety purposes. The Consumer Safety Institute in the Netherlands maintains a database of accidents gathered from press cuttings and the cost of such system is rather low.
- At present, insurance companies mainly collect general information on accidents that would not respond to the EU needs in terms of product and service safety. However, 'niche' companies dealing with specific damages can have detailed information on accidents caused by certain types of products and/or services.
- Business databases at the level of individual companies sometimes include detailed information on accidents involving their products, in particular following when consumer complaints. But this information is often kept confidential for competition purposes and is not gathered and harmonised at a sectoral level.
- Data collected by General Practitioners can also provide a good source of information on those accidents that are less severe. The example of the Sentinel General Practitioners network in Belgium was presented. The type of data collected is more of an epidemiological nature. The past experience of collecting data on product involvement was not delivering expected results.
- Fire rescue services collect statistics on fire accidents at international level via the International Association for Fire and Rescue Services (CTIF), which provides a well-developed network of fire brigades. These statistics vary from one country to another and are not always very detailed as regards the causes of accidents, the involvement of product and the place of the accident (no distinction amongst different types of buildings).
- Academic initiatives such as the Susy Safe project on suffocation accidents amongst young children are another way of getting data in specific areas. The system is based on a voluntary basis and should provide detailed data on product involvement in such suffocation injuries.
- In the Flemish part of Belgium, a new internet-based system for collecting data on unsafe children products for children between 0 and 3 years has just been launched by the association Kind and Gezin. Parents can directly enter on Kind & Gezin's webpage reports of safety problems due to children products. It is possible to have rather detailed information on the product involved and on the circumstances of the accident. The system is very simple, represent very limited costs and will be promoted by Kind & Gezin, an association in direct contact with 97% of young parents in Flanders. Such a system could easily be transposed to other countries and to other sectors.
- Data collection systems for consumer services are of a different nature in general. As regards accidents at amusement parks and fairgrounds, The US experience proves that a classical hospital-based surveillance system only capture a limited number of accidents (as amusement parks are situated in specific locations which are not cover by the injury surveillance system). US parks are currently providing statistical data to

an independent organisation and an extension of this system is planned for Europe. However, data collected does not include a detailed description of the accidents. For skiing accidents, information collected by rescue services and the local police generally provide details on the circumstances of the accidents but no specific information on product involvement. The French system for skiing accident data which has been developed by the national observatory SNOSM is a good example of an information system based on multiple sources.

## ***Conclusions***

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This Workshop presented an impressive number of systems and initiatives to collect data on accidents, which are currently rather fragmented. There is a clear need (1) to facilitate access to existing information and (2) to use existing initiatives and extend them as appropriate to get more systematic and comparable information in the future.

### ***Access to existing information***

As a first step, the Commission will consider how to set up a central webpage listing all relevant possible sources of information in a coherent way. It will provide a starting point for future co-operation and improvements in the area and should be updated on a regular basis.

### ***Improvements to the EU Injury Database (IDB)***

The IDB is an important source of information with an important potential. The focus of our future activities should be on improving the system both in quantitative terms (level of information provided for consumer safety policy) and qualitative terms (number of Member States participating in the data collection).

As regards qualitative improvements, it is fundamental to improve the current system so that it could better collect data on product and service safety. The on-going study carried out by the Consumer Safety institute on behalf of the Commission and whose results will be available by the end of 2006 should provide key elements to improve the system. The Commission will also review and get inspiration for possible future developments from the US and Canadian experiences.

As regards quantitative improvements, the Commission (DG ESTAT) is currently drafting a proposal for a framework Regulation concerning Community statistics on public health and health and safety at work that would introduce an obligation for Member States to collect data in relation to accidents and injuries. If adopted, it would place the IDB on a firmer ground and will ensure a constant participation of all Member States in the future.

### ***Additional data collection mechanisms***

The IDB, even with an improved version of it, could not be the only source of for risk assessment needs.

The existing best practices, including the ones discussed during the workshop can help devising complementary systems to better cover data needs for products and services. It

should also be considered how such best practices can be extended to cover as many EU countries as possible.

More specific follow-up meetings should be considered in order to discuss the development of European thematic networks and the organisation of pilot projects in certain areas. In particular, the following projects should be envisaged as a concrete outcome of the workshop:

- Press reports constitute a useful complementary source of information, especially when dealing with fatal and serious accidents and as a sort of warning system. Quality controls need to be established in order to ensure that information is accurate. The experience of the Netherlands and other sectoral associations should be used as a starting point to look at how the system should be built (coverage, level of information, themes, keywords etc.). The Commission will further discuss with relevant organisations and in particular Eurosafe on how such a system could be established.
- The EAPCCT represent a good platform for collecting data as regards poison accidents and the Commission is ready to support a specific project to develop the existing network. Further cooperation with the EAPCCT should be established in order to clarify what type of information should be collected on a regular basis and to agree on the design of a future database in this area.
- Statistics on fire accidents collected from fire brigades should be further developed, especially for important issues related to product and service safety. A pilot project on statistics covering fire safety in hotels could be considered. The Commission intends to further discuss with CTIF the possible contents of such a project.
- Further identification of specific data that could be collected on a regular basis via “niche” insurance companies will be carried out in co-operation with the European Committee of Insurers (CEA).
- Manufacturers should further provide input into the RAPEX database and contribute to the notification of dangerous products found on the EU market. Further bilateral discussion with sectoral business associations should take place to see how detailed data collected from some of their major members could be shared with the Commission at a non-competitive level.
- The project on unsafe children’s products developed in Belgium is promising and constitutes a good pilot for further projects to be conducted by consumer organisations, based locally and with a well-defined thematic approach.

Continued commitment of all stakeholders to co-operate on these ambitious projects is vital. The success will depend to a large extent on sustained sharing of experience and commitment to collaborate.

Regular feedback and monitoring of progress on the various projects will be organised. The Commission suggested that another meeting of this type could take place in a year to review progress.