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Health & Consumer Protection
Directorate-General

Public Health and Risk Assessment
Risk Assessment Unit

Maximising the Contribution of Science to European Health and Safety

A DG SANCO consultation paper - July 05

Meeting of Chairs of Scientific Committees and Panels of Community bodies involved in Risk Assessment

CCAB, Brussels

7/8 December 2005

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Context

- ✓ ***EU policies on health, food chain safety, consumer protection and animal health are science based.***
- ✓ ***In our knowledge based society, there is a need for more accurate understanding of limitations of scientific certainty and the role*** *of* ***judgement.***
- ✓ ***Better communication helps achieve clearer risk perceptions and better integration of risk into EU policy debates.***
- ✓ ***The ability to highlight and communicate uncertainties is of paramount importance.***
- ✓ ***The pace of science can critically affect SANCO's delivery of its missions.***

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Content of the paper

The paper sets out a series of actions which SANCO wishes to pursue under 4 areas:

- ***Section B: Risk Assessment Capacity***
- ***Section C: Risk Assessment Data***
- ***Section D: Risk Assessment Mandates***
- ***Section E: Content of assessment***

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B) Risk Assessment Capacity

1. ***Promote increased post graduate training of risk assessors.***

2. ***Promote on-the- job training for risk assessors.***

3. ***Promote greater use of external experts in scientific committees and panels***

4. ***Expand principle of SCENIHR's "Associated Members" with full rights of participation for a specific question to the other 2 non-food SCs.***

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C) Risk Assessment Data

5. ***Encourage SCs to make ex-ante calls for available data at outset of the work not applicable to authorisations where petitioner provides a dossier)***

6. ***Explore with EFSA how it could develop data gathering networks rather than depend on panel members***

7. ***Explore with Committees their interest in using contracted support for gathering data. Encourage networking with other organisations and bodies (EFSA, non-food SCs, WHO, FAO…)***

8. ***Establish group of officials to explore better use of RTD and JRC capacity to support data needs for SCs***

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D) Content of Risk Assessment mandates

9.

i) Require risk managers to draft mandates which are limited to issues that science can address and are sufficiently broad to cover - possible unintended effects, the aspect of "alternatives" where a substance may be banned, risk-benefit and all sources of exposure.

ii) Emphasise need for improved risk assessor / manager communication during preparation of mandates and draft reports. Greater involvement of stakeholders when drafting mandates.

iii) Suggest systematic networking between risk assessors and other agencies, 3rd countries; take into account international scientific opinions.

iv) Ask risk assessors to define research needs to fill data gaps (not for petitioners)

v) Ask for inclusion of a period for public comment on "draft final opinions " whenever useful; address points raised by other scientific bodies; document minority/dissenting views.

D) Content of Risk Assessment mandates
(continued)

9.

vi) Ask for assessment of data quality

- ***Peer reviewed data ?***
- ***Degrees of uncertainty (qualitative more often than quantitative)***
- ***Weight of evidence***

10. Monitor quality of mandate drafting: assess how far the opinion meets the manager's needs – SANCO officials to make systematic assessment covering time-lines, quality of peer review, nature of data gaps, research needs …..

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E) Content of assessments

11. ***Launch a pilot "lay language summary" based on the complex opinion on tooth whiteners. Possible development of guidelines for presentation of scientific advice to decision makers and stakeholders.***

12. ***Explore with the chairs of the non-food SCs the completion of the former SSC work on a common thesaurus for authors of risk assessments.***

13. ***Explore interests of SC chairs in better networking, enhanced inter-committee cooperation, coherence in similar cases and harmonisation.***

14. ***Encourage EFSA led review on genotoxic carcinogens; Consider non-food SC comparative review of approaches to non-thresholded effects in cooperation with EFSA and other interested bodies.***

15. ***Develop a feed back mechanism for learning for learning from e.g. international differences to specific substances (example of phthalates with the US CPSC)***

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Consultation

Comments on this paper or ON the presentation are most welcome and can also be given in writing via the following address:

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Closing date: 31 December 2005