RISK ASSESSMENT AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC HEALTH
A MEDICAL TOXICOLOGIST’S VIEW

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A view to the future

The Directorate of Public Health at the MH has recently expressed an intent to finance the foundation of a new centre at the NIPH which will carry out the following tasks:

- identify existing and new environmental risks to human health
- assess the risks
- propose appropriate risk reduction measures
- establish a network of professionals from other institutions involved in various aspects of risk assessment.

We welcome the establishment of an adequately supported Centre for Risk Assessment at the NIPH and are proposing the following activities:

- to set up a scientific institution for risk assessment, i.e. regional public health institutes, academia, private research institutions, as well as, some governmental agencies and inspectorates of the MH, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and non-governmental institutions
- to review the state of the science/an in the area of risk assessment procedures of newly emerging and existing substances, developing methodology and procedures
- to analyse the methodological approaches including deviations from the international guidelines
- to prepare national protocols according to internationally accepted methodologies
- to identify resource gaps
- to develop algorithms of communication among the institutions
- to develop algorithms of systematic data sharing and data exchange
- to define national priorities for risk assessment based on:
  - hazard identification and characterisation
  - exposure assessment using the existing human biomonitoring data, environmental monitoring data and/or mathematical modelling
  - size of the exposed population
  - vulnerability of the exposed population

- to prepare priority risk assessments in order to propose risk reduction measures and to test the effectiveness of the established communication network
- to develop protocols for rapid cases in areas of emerging accidents and bioterrorism
- to develop, design and carry out education and training for risk assessors
- to maintain the existing and build up new capacities by continuous professional development
- to introduce new methodologies where appropriate
- to cooperate with international networks in the EU and the World Health Organisation level
- to disseminate the information to the public
- to participate in teaching.

Based on acquired knowledge and expertise outlined in historical perspectives, we believe that it is feasible to implement the above plan in four years with a multidisciplinary team of 12 whole time equivalent experts with a relevant background such as biochemistry, biology, chemistry, environmental chemistry, food science, medicine, microbiology, physics, sanitary engineering, veterinary medicine and administrative support (at least 1 WTE). However, establishing an effective network of professionals from other institutions including data sharing and data exchange may present a major challenge and may not be possible on good will and ethical grounds only, but may require legal regulation.

References


