



BEMS/DEMS symposium 2018

COMMUNICATING TOXICOLOGY: WHAT'S THE RISK?

Date: Thursday 29 November 2018.

Location: Vlaams-Europees Verbindingsagentschap, Kortenberglaan 71, Brussel

With no less than about 20,000 dangerous substances registered at the EU level (ECHA, 2018), the issue of risk assessment and risk communication has evolved to an increasingly challenging task during the last decades. Although vast efforts have been invested in the regulation of physical, chemical and biologically hazardous agents, it should be acknowledged that full knowledge is limited to a relatively small part of an exponentially growing market. Further, the risk perception of stakeholders not only depends on the intrinsic hazard or risk in the first place, but also -and in particularly- on external factors, such as media and lobbying, which place the facts into different contexts.

Scientists and risk assessors are trained to generate valid and robust data, which should allow risk managers and policy makers to build reasoned opinions and take measures to ensure safe use of hazardous agents. However, we should recognise that humans are hardwired to feel first and think second, so how biased are our recommendations, and, even more importantly, how do we get our message across?

During this symposium, keynote lectures will address scientific and regulatory issues in the field of GMO's, pharmaceutical drugs, cosmetics and plant protection products. The important issue of how media highlight the hazards, exposure, risks, harm-benefit balances and residual uncertainties, will also be discussed.

Along with these lectures, there will be a poster session where young scientists will present their latest research. Finally, an interactive workshop will be organised around two case studies that were widely discussed in the general media: fipronil contamination in the food chain and environmental contamination of fluorinated polymers used in coatings (PFOA/GenX). Discussion of these cases will offer the opportunity to all participants to share their experiences and widen their views on the interdisciplinary topic of hazard and risk communication.

We look forward to welcoming you in Brussels!

Giel Hendriks

DEMS chair

Lode Godderis

BEMS chair