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| BETTER REGULATION WORKSHOP FOR THE SAFE USE OF DETERGENTS & MAINTENANCE PRODUCTS: CONCLUSIONS OF THE DAY |
| **How to communicate effectively to consumers?** | **Friday 10 June 2016, 10:30-16:30**Brussels |

**Participation:**

- About 45 persons;

- Attendance: European Commisison (GROW, JUST), Member States (BE, DE, FI, NL), RPA (lead consultant for the study on the Fitness Check of chemicals legislation (excluding REACH)), NGOs (BE), Poison Control Centres (BE, IT), other Downstream Users, Retailers, Detergent Industry representatives.

The above workshop was intended to complement a range of efforts by numerous stakeholders over the last 12 months to improve the current legislative framework for chemicals. Here the specific focus was on communication to consumers to ensure safe use of detergents and maintenance products by looking at on pack labeling and other means of communication.

The workshop featured speakers from all concerned parts of society including regulators, medical profession, competent authorities, and industry.

In its plenary part, it offered a forum for laying out individual views on the current situation and opportunities for improvement while later break-out sessions allowed for a deep dive into defining consumer research methodology planned by A.I.S.E. for better identification of current issues as well as an in depth dialogue with medical professionals to better understand their needs.

Despite the breadth of stakeholder representation, there was consensus that the current labeling situation based on CLP is not meeting fully its objective of effectively communicating with consumers and with medical professionals. It was felt, that in particular the transition from the Dangerous Preparation Directive to the CLP Regulation had led to increased confusion due to information overload on labels. In some cases lack of sensitivity for distinguishing between more and less ‘dangerous products’ was observed. This was of particular concern to the medical profession representatives which expressed their concerns of seeing label fatigue and resulting carelessness when consumers handle products that do need special care. Speakers and audience seemed aligned that the current situation asks for significant improvement. This was confirmed by the paints and aerosol industries facing similar issues. The value though of other complementary / voluntary labelling initiatives (such as A.I.S.E. safe use icons) was also noted.

**Break-out session ONE** discussed in depth the consumer research protocol and A.I.S.E. planned research to deepen knowledge about consumers’ understanding of and attention to current labels. The group eventually concluded that the planned approach of multi-country (BE, ES, PL) qualitative interviews with eye tracker methodology, general awareness questions and targeted situational enquiries was an appropriate first step for an initial understanding. Minor suggestions were made to the protocol and those will be included prior to the field work (20-28 June 2016). It was acknowledged that this type of research cannot provide quantitative perspective about level of consumer understanding, yet only qualitative guidance on the type of issues consumers face and possible leads for improvement. These insights (which are expected in mid/late July) can then guide corrective action or be the basis for more targeted (quantitative) research.

**Break-out session TWO** discussed how the medical community looks at current labeling of consumer products and revealed significant deficiencies. Poison Control Centers (PCC’s) typically observe confusion among patients as to the meaning of the various pictograms – especially with the corrosive symbol, given that its use has been extended under CLP to many detergents. This change under CLP also makes it no longer possible for the PCCs to determine whether a product is corrosive, based on presence of the icon, without additional information. It was also highlighted that treatment in case of accident cannot be based on pictograms only, and that the narrative (“P-statements”) helpfulness could be improved because critical instructions are buried in too much text. Some PCC’s treat requests on the basis of product information which is available online and which is undergoing yet further optimization via introduction of an on pack unique formula identifier (UFI) code. Conversely dermatologists advocate on-pack-labeling as the best way to help inform allergy patients. More discussion will show whether one approach for the entire medical community is conceivable.

**In conclusion, the workshop developed multi-stakeholder consensus on the need to act and on the type of research needed to obtain more clarity on existing issues and possible solutions (e.g. digital communication, other pictograms etc.) This type of exchange would seem useful also for discussion of possible solutions once new data are in.**

For all workshop details and presentations, please visit:

<https://www.aise.eu/events/events-list/better-regulation-workshop-for-the-safe-use-of-detergents-and-maintenance-products.aspx?back=184>

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