



The event was staged in the Energy Hall of the DASA Working World Exhibition in Dortmund ©
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SUMMARY OF THE EU CONFERENCE "STOP CANCER IN THE WORKPLACE" ON 09 AND 10 NOVEMBER 2020

During the German Council Presidency in the second half of 2020, BAuA/BMAS wanted to focus the European Community's attention on the still highly relevant issue of work-related cancer and deaths. To this end, the EU Commission, colleagues from ECHA, the Member States and the social partners were invited to discuss problems and possible solutions together. Even though the pandemic made direct exchange difficult, the interest of the participants was high. This was demonstrated by more than 1,500 viewers from 26 countries worldwide who followed the live transmission from the Energy Hall of the DASA Working world exhibition in Dortmund.

Around 100 invited participants exchanged views on further steps to prevent work-related cancer and agreed that, in addition to the legal regulations, further efforts are needed to support companies in protecting their employees. The speakers presented ideas and initiatives on how to make good practice examples and solutions available to all employees. The Roadmap on Carcinogens, which provides good solutions and practical ideas on how to work safely with carcinogenic substances free of charge for all on its platform, plays an important role here. The conference also focused on the future of the interface between health and safety and internal market policies and its impact on stakeholder cooperation ([PDF programme, www.baua.de/dok/8850796](#)).

After the opening of the event by the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), the participants were introduced to the central topics of the event by the Chairman of the German Committee on Hazardous Substances (AGS). The starting point here was the assessment of cancer risks in the national occupational safety landscape ([PDF KeyNote, Kayser \(BASF\), www.baua.de/dok/8850744](#)). Individual topics were then discussed in greater depth. In the stakeholder dialogue, questions on substitution possibilities, the risk concept for carcinogenic

Stefan Olsson (DG EMPL): *'The symbolic importance of this event is enormous because it shows the almost unique joint commitment of all partners (EU-Commission, EU-Parliament, the Agencies, Member States and Social Partners) to maintain the momentum of the fight against occupational cancer. Therefore, the fight against occupational cancer has to have a central role in the new and upcoming EU OSH framework.'*

substances, the practicability of containment solutions and, more recently, the applicability of biological monitoring for exposure control are repeatedly at the centre of the discussion. Therefore, one focus of this event was the discourse on these topics in the setting of a World Café.

WORLD CAFÉ

- *Metals and metal compounds* are part of everyday life and, due to their recyclability, make an excellent contribution to recycling management, sustainability and resource efficiency. However, many metal compounds are carcinogenic and the risks are particularly high in workplaces where they are produced and processed (welding, cutting, soldering, etc.). Thus, metals represent an example of a dilemma for many carcinogenic substances. The discussion therefore critically addressed the question of how the protection of the individual has to be weighed up against a consideration of society as a whole. The details of the discussions, which reflected on substitution possibilities, but also on scientific aspects and measurability, can be found in the presentation of results (*PDF Metalle, Wieske (WVM)*, www.baua.de/dok/8850756). One aspect has emerged in the discussion of all groups: When setting limit values for carcinogenic substances in the workplace (BOELVs in the context of the CMD), transparent communication of the cancer risks would be important in the future in order to be able to better assess risks when assessing feasibility and impact assessment.
- Thus, the results of the World Café on metals underline the need to discuss the second, prominent topic of the World Café, which dealt with the *risk-based approach to carcinogenic substances (RBA)*. The clear message from the participants was that when deriving binding limit values, it must be made clear in future what risks these values are associated with, so that no false sense of safety for workers is conveyed. The basic idea and obstacles to a risk-based approach were already discussed at a conference in The Hague in February 2020 (*final report*). There was strong support from the World Café for the implementation of a risk-based approach to regulation and proposals for next concrete steps to take the issue forward (*PDF RBA, Pipke (BAuA)*, www.baua.de/dok/8850762).
- Despite many substitution efforts in industry, carcinogenic hazardous substances still play an important role, although they often have no threshold and effects occur only after a long time. The Carcinogens Directive therefore requires employers to ensure that the carcinogen is manufactured and used in closed systems, where technically possible. However, personal protective equipment is often used to control exposure, although containment solutions achieve a minimisation of substance dispersion and are therefore a superior alternative. The motivation for the World Café was to determine what role *containment solutions* actually play in practice, what prevents the use of these solutions and how their use can be promoted. As a result, it can be concluded that containment solutions need to be developed sector- and case-specifically and in some cases individually. Furthermore, when exchanging information on good practice solutions, exposure control must always be considered comprehensively (in conjunction with ventilation technology and organisational measures) (for further details see *PDF Containment, Engel (BASF)*, www.baua.de/dok/8850758).
- *Biomonitoring* is of growing interest for carcinogens in the workplace, as it may reduce the burden of inhalation and dermal exposure assessment. In many Member States, biomonitoring has traditionally been used mainly to assess the risks to individuals. In other countries, it focuses on exposure control, which is why this task is usually performed by occupational hygienists. For international harmonisation it is necessary to understand different approaches. The role of biomonitoring in exposure control and the derivation of risk reduction measures must be defined substance-specifically and a uniform application of findings by biological material results must be defined. A further complicating factor is that when considering the introduction of binding

biological limit values, it has to be regarded that the participation of the employee is voluntary and that the privacy of the individual is respected. For the substance-specific facts to be taken into account, one needs in any case well-founded knowledge of how to make optimal use of biomonitoring results and good guidance on how to do so. (*PDF Biomonitoring, Santonen (TTL)*, www.baua.de/dok/8850760).

ROADMAP ON CARCINOGENS 2.0

In 2016, the *Roadmap on Carcinogens* (RoC1.0) was initiated as a joint action programme to raise awareness of carcinogens in companies and to provide tools to combat exposure to carcinogens in

Kris de Meester (Business Europe): *'We are very thankful to past, present and future presidencies that will carry on the spirit and the goals of the Roadmap. It is an opportunity and an eye-opener to have an integrated approach. Protecting workers doesn't stop with regulations and limit values unless this is translated into practice. This is the main challenges and therefore providing help as one of the main goals of the Roadmap is so important. The Roadmap brings the legal framework to life.'*

the workplace. During the conference, the roadmap was renewed as Roadmap on Carcinogens 2.0 (RoC2.0), which guides old and new European partners through Europe from Berlin 2020 to Brussels 2024. European employers' and workers' organisations, the European Commission, EU-OSHA, a handful of new Member States and ECHA have all endorsed the strategy and will play an active role in the coming years. This second phase of the Roadmap sets ambitious targets. In RoC2.0, the original objectives of raising awareness and providing assistance remain valid, while there is also an increased focus on mobilising more stakeholders and targeted innovation. Within these four pillars, specific projects ('Challenges') with different priorities and timeframes will be managed and implemented by the Roadmap partners. Twelve of

the projects have already been designed and will start in 2021. One thing became very clear in the course of the event: The social partners, Member States and the European Commission have high hopes for the Roadmap on Carcinogens and the will to jointly pursue and support the objectives is enormous (*PDF RoC2.0, Pipke (BAuA)*, www.baua.de/dok/8850746).

PLENARY PRESENTATIONS

In the plenary lectures, topics were presented which have a high practical relevance to activities with carcinogens. These include the work programme "Carcinogenic Hazardous Substances" within the framework of the Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy (*PDF GDA, Au (HMS)*, www.baua.de/dok/8850748), the National Asbestos Dialogue in Germany (*PDF Asbestos, Bonner (BMAS)*, www.baua.de/dok/8850750), the 'Worker Exposure Survey' organised by EU-OSHA on exposure to carcinogens (*PDF, Work on Carcinogens, Schneider (EU-OSHA)*, www.baua.de/dok/8850752) and the topic of substitution, which reported on the search for and limits of alternatives (*PDF Substitution, Clever (BAuA)*, www.baua.de/dok/8850754).

PENAL DISCUSSION 'WAY FORWARD FOR THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN REACH AND OSH'

Experience with the application of occupational health and safety regulations under REACH and with the OSH regulations shows that both areas have a number of points of contact. For a better description of the interface, it is helpful to describe *comprehensible criteria* which of the two regulations are to be

applied in each case. Germany's initiative to structure the topic of restrictions under REACH with occupational health and safety content should be seen in this respect. The EU Commission has taken up the topic and has entered into discussions at REACH (CARACAL) and OSH (WPC) level. The starting point for the considerations is current experience with different approaches to individual substances.

The example of metals makes this clear. For cobalt compounds a restriction is proposed, for nickel compounds occupational exposure limits are under discussion. A group of similar metal compounds is regulated differently. On the other hand, the good functioning of the REACH - OSH interface is mentioned using the example of the authorisation for chromium VI compounds. The targeted use in trade and industry is subject to the authorisation procedure, the non-targeted exposure e.g. to welding fumes is covered by corresponding limit values. A similar approach is conceivable for the cobalt restriction, if harmonised limit values are added. Closely linked to the issue of restrictions is the setting of limits for carcinogens.

All stakeholders agree that with *26 limit values so far*, we are *on the right track*, especially as other important limit values are at an advanced stage of discussion. In addition to the adaptation of the annexes, there are other issues which aim to amend the Carcinogens Directive (e.g. inclusion of substances toxic to reproduction and hazardous medical products/cytostatic drugs, concept of a risk-based approach).

The awareness-raising, assistance, mobilisation of other stakeholders and targeted innovation pillars of the Roadmap on Carcinogens will lay the foundations to support SMEs in particular and to address the fact that innovation in industry and commerce does not happen overnight. This applies, for example, to substitution or the introduction of new and potentially costly technology.

There are interfaces between legal areas not only in REACH and OSH, but also, for example, between REACH and waste or water law. REACH and OSH have many things in common, such as the scientific basis of risk assessments, the methodological approach to the selection of protective measures and, of course, the common goal of providing optimum protection for employees. Important for communication at the interface is the consideration of *the different roles that stakeholders have*. For example, the EU Commission (DG EMPL) is seeking advice from the Committee for Safety and Health (ACSH) on the regulation of chemicals. The starting point here is the proven and good cooperation of the social partners in the *Working Party on Chemicals (WPC)*. On the other (REACH) side, it is the Member States who initiate proposals for the regulation of individual substances. They have the responsibility to coordinate proposals nationally in order to facilitate further discussions at EU level. More efficiency at the REACH-OSH interface can be achieved through *intensive communication involving all stakeholders, including social partners, at an early stage*. Similarly, a decision on what should be regulated where should be taken as early as possible, e.g. on the basis of an RMOA. These are the prerequisites for exploiting the potential for the better solution.

Björn Hansen (ECHA): *'In essence, different legislations dealing with carcinogens have very much the same objectives and machineries and where there are different views, this is based on individuals and tradition and that there hasn't been a lot of talking. Basically, what we are talking about is of two communities becoming one. That is my big plea in terms of increasing and accelerating the efficiency on regulating the risk from carcinogens - we should simply look at us as the worker protection community.'*

IMPACT AND OUTLOOK

The REACH/OSH interface is becoming increasingly well described. In a next step, criteria are needed to determine when which regulation is best suited to solve a problem in activities involving carcinogens. The key is to weigh up options for action early on and to involve all stakeholders in these decision-making processes.

The unifying element of all the presentations, the discussions in the World Café and the hopes placed in the roadmap is the recognition that there are no blanket solutions to the wide range of risks associated with carcinogenic substances. The Community needs specific solutions for individual workplaces, stakeholders need tools that are easy to understand and implement, and it must be clear to all that only together we can improve safety in the workplace. This common basic understanding was further consolidated at the conference and the high priority given to 'STOP Cancer at Work' was consistently underlined by all stakeholders.

OTHER IMPRESSIONS

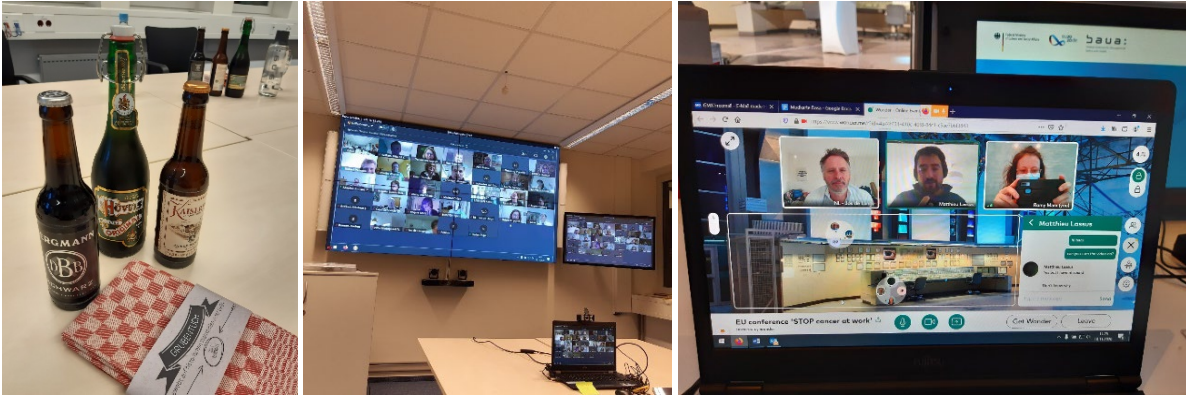
All lectures and the recording of the livestream can be accessed on the [BAuA website](#). A few visual impressions of the conference are also attached below.



Impressions from the 'Energy Hall' control centre (DASA, Dortmund) including technical equipment and interpreter booths © Andreas Wahlbrink (BAuA)



Impressions of moderation and recording of contributions © Andreas Wahlbrink (BAuA)



The digital *beertasting* on the evening of 09.11. was an entertaining and welcome alternative to the usual get-together at a conference (left, centre © Romy Marx). The interactive coffee break also provided space for informal exchange between participants (right, © Romy Marx).

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