



# Modernet Newsletter

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### Message from our Chair Lode Godderis



Dear Modernet friends,

Europe played a central role in the establishment of Modernet, as Modernet was supported by EU-Cost funding. Despite the fact that most members still work and live in Europe, we gradually evolve towards an international network. This is an important evolution, as we observe that each continent is struggling in order to detect and monitor work-

related diseases. Within Modernet we bring expertise together, expand and intensify the collaboration. Our annual meetings are important opportunities for this collaboration. I hereby would like to invite you to join the conference in Prague October 20-21 2016: "Occupational and environmental diseases; from nano-problem to big data".

Also the international scientific community has noticed our scientific work. Modernet colleagues won the 'Best Paper in Epidemiology in Occupational Health Award'. This is an important acknowledgment and I really would like to congratulate Jill and everybody who collaborated in this important study. It is a nice example of how collaboration within Modernet leads to important scientific results. Jill will present the paper: "Trends in incidence of occupational asthma, contact dermatitis, noise-induced hearing loss, carpal tunnel syndrome and upper limb musculoskeletal disorders in European countries from 2000 to 2012" in the EPICOH conference in Barcelona early September.

Please share with us your results, so that we can help in the dissemination. Also the EU-OSHA agency in Bilbao is willing to support the dissemination of the findings from our work, such as through their OSHwiki. As this is an interesting opportunity, we are currently looking for information and authors who would be willing to write a wiki on the Modernet topics.



Within Modernet, the work does not stop with the publication and dissemination of results. Hence the early detection and monitoring (and

thus reduction) of work-related diseases requires efforts from several stakeholders, including policy makers and social partners. The past months several actions have been undertaken in order to create awareness and to make this objective feasible. A nice example was the EU- conference on the prevention of work-related cancer in Amsterdam in which researchers, stakeholders and policymakers came together to discuss on how to reduce occupational cancers. More information you can read further in this newsletter.



We also had the opportunity to meet Mrs. Marianne Thyssen, EU-commissioner of Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility. We talked about the results and future plans of Modernet. It was clear that the priorities coincided and that there are opportunities for exchange of information and collaboration. We discussed about surveillance and reporting systems and methods to assess the impact and effectiveness of EU-legislation on workers' safety and health. It is clear that the EU is looking for studies that assess the impact of their directives on health and safety. Please let me know, if you would have reports and information on this.

Finally, we are also following up Horizon 2020 calls; hence we have the ambition to obtain a Horizon 2020 funding. Also here, if you notice opportunities, you are more than welcome to get in contact with us. Regarding the financing of future projects, there is also an interesting report available online on the sources of funding for occupational safety and health in Europe. <https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/eu-osha-funding-guide-2015/view>

Despite the fact that a lot of work is already done, also a lot remains to be carried out. And it is clear that your active contribution is necessary. I hope to hear from you in the near future and to meet you in Prague,

Enjoy your summer,



Lode

**Modernet meeting in Prague; 20 and 21 October 2016**

**"Occupational and environmental diseases;  
from nano-problem to big data"**

**<http://modernet.org/content/modernet-meeting-prague>**



**The strategy for a non-toxic environment of the 7<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme**

*Jelena Bakusic, KU Leuven, Belgium*

The workshop 'Strategy for a non-toxic environment', was held in Brussels on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2016. It was held within the realm of the study 'The strategy for a non-toxic environment of the 7<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme' which is being carried out by the European Commission (DG ENV). The study was initiated in 2013 after identification of gaps in the legislation specific to chemical policies, and is planned to be carried out until 2018. The study includes seven sub-studies focussing on the following topics:

- 1) Substitution, including grouping of chemicals & measures to support substitution
- 2) Chemicals in products (articles) and non-toxic material cycles
- 3) The improved protection of children and vulnerable groups from harmful exposure to chemicals
- 4) Sub-strategy for very persistent chemicals
- 5) Policy means, innovation and competitiveness
- 6) A Green Chemicals Programme
- 7) The creation of a joint early warning system for approaching chemical threats to health and the environment.

Beside the common program that included a general presentation of the project as well as an introduction on the each sub-study, participants had a

chance to take part in two interactive feedback sessions by choosing two of the seven sub-studies of their particular interest.

From the aspect of the MODERNET, the sub-study on **Early Warning Systems for emerging chemical risks** was particularly interesting. The study background was presented by Jukka Malm from the European Chemical Agency (ECHA) and the following workshop was facilitated by Joost Bakker and Yuri Bruinen de Bruin from the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM). In the first part of the workshop we had a chance to hear more about the sub-study. Its main objectives are to provide:

- An overview of existing projects and studies in the area of early warning systems that could be of inspiration for the development of an early warning system for chemical risks;
- An assessment of existing mechanisms that can trigger risk management actions when chemical risks are identified;
- Aspects of a possible EU-wide early warning system for chemical risks, including potential components that already exist or would need to be developed;
- An initial view of the potential benefits as well as costs if such a system would be developed.

The work carried out to date has focused on the first aim – to gather an overview of existing projects and studies in this area. The research has identified three policy areas where early warnings of chemical risks are considered particularly important: 1) environmental protection, 2) occupational health and safety, and 3) consumer protection, including food safety.

Several gaps and deficits in this field were identified including the following:

- The identification of possible new or emerging chemical risks in the field of occupational safety and health is difficult in several countries, as it is challenging to achieve funding of expert centres focused on the study of occupational health effect.
- An international platform dealing with work-related health effects and occupational diseases is lacking.
- No information on costs of early warning systems was found.
- A general question relating to health as well as environment is how to cope with the time lag between exposure and adverse effects.
- No system that interlinks all focus areas has been identified.
- Early indications derived from a systematic review of exposure and risk assessment procedures in current early warning systems raise questions about their effectiveness.
- An identified gap is the knowledge on communications methods. The current focus is rather on the identification of new or emerging risks and proposing suitable risk management measures.

Some of the suggested improvement opportunities were:

- More cooperation and exchange of information at the EU or international level The set-up of a central (EU) system supporting the input and output of information relating to NERCs

- A principal decision at the EU level to clarify intention or taking action to support the development of an early warning system.
- Improvement of existing risk assessment methodology/schemes by incorporating additional and more specific endpoints, e.g. on endocrine disruption.
- There is a need to further investigate the feasibility of interlinking and coordinating all focus areas such as environment, consumers and worker. Each of these areas has its specific approach, experts and data sources. Nevertheless, some parts of the system could well use the same approaches and tools. However, for practical reasons it might be easier to develop and maintain separate systems and to let them exchange information at a certain level.

During the workshop, we discussed each of the steps in the creation of an early warning system in several subgroups: 1) picking up signals; 2) signal evaluation; 3) signal strengthening; 4) risk score and prioritization of risk and 5) follow-up actions. Participants of the each subgroup provided a feedback on how that particular step could be further developed and improved. At the end of the day facilitators presented a summary feedback from the each workshop in front of the big group.

This interactive workshop brought up together different groups of experts and provided a platform for an exchange of ideas and a fruitful discussion. It was undoubtedly a valuable experience and a step forward in this challenging project.

### **Amsterdam Conference launches EU Roadmap on Carcinogens**

*By Annet Lenderink*

The conference 'Preventing work-related cancer - conference on carcinogens' was organized by the Dutch presidency of the European Union and took place on 23-25 May 2016 in the Europe Building in Amsterdam. The conference was aimed at reducing the incidence of work-related cancer and setting more exposure limits for working with carcinogens.

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*3 days      278 participants  
27 speakers      1 roadmap  
and lots of inspiring ideas*

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Every year, between 50,000 and 100,000 workers in the European Union die as a result of exposure to carcinogenic substances at work. It is essential to protect employees in the EU from such substances. The conference highlighted existing and new insights into the problems associated with carcinogens and the ways to reduce exposure to these substances. One of the important measures is to set more EU limits for exposure to carcinogens. Other factors including the behaviour of employers and employees, and innovations in removing and replacing carcinogens were also discussed at the conference.

There were about 300 invited participants from the Netherlands and abroad: researchers, policy makers, representatives of employers and workers and politicians. They exchanged their knowledge and experience during the three-day conference. The conference had a highly interactive set-up with plenty of room for discussion. From our Modernet network several people participated: Lode Godderis, Nicole Palmen, Henk van der Molen, Annet Lenderink, Peter Noone, Kieran Sludds, Ari Kaukainen, Begoña Martinez, Riitta Sauni, David Miedinger and probably some others I forgot (excuses for that).

The conference opened with a plenary session on the severity and scope of the issues surrounding carcinogens and the consequences for affected employees. After a short film of two people with a work-related cancer many facts and figures were presented. In his opening speech Kevin Myers, chairman of the International Association of Labour Inspection, warned that presenting too many figures may blur the real messages. He talked about ownership, leadership and partnership in addressing problems and also put his finger on the sore spot: the costs and benefits are often not the same parties, "Businesses are not good at investing in measures when they don't see the immediate benefits; particularly when the costs of occupational disease are carried by society or individuals".

More figures on the extent of the problem came from Rob Jongeneel and Petra Eysink from the Dutch National Institute of Public Health presenting the report "Burden of disease and societal costs of work-related cancer in the European Union".

The official opening came from two politicians who were closely involved in the initiative to pay more attention to work-related cancers: the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, Lodewijk Asscher, and the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen. Minister Asscher said that: "Everyone deserves a safe work environment. We need to do our utmost to provide such an environment". Commissioner Marianne Thyssen spoke about the new threshold limit values for carcinogens: "New limits for 13 cancer causing chemicals will save 100,000 lives in the next years", referring to the purpose earlier that month launched Commission's proposal. She added that a proposal for 12 additional substances will be discussed before the end of this year. The goal is to expand this in the coming years to 50 limit values for carcinogens in the workplace.

#### *Spontaneous lectures*



The second day began with a meeting between researchers and other participants in the coffee lounge leading to spontaneous mini lectures and interesting discussions. Then the attention shifted to risk perception in dealing with carcinogens and how you could improve this through campaigns. There were three parallel

	<p>sessions prepared on "best practices": one on Early warning systems (prepared by Lode Godderis and Nicole Palmen), one on campaigns to raise awareness (Campaign 'No time to lose ") and one on removing asbestos. In these sessions was plenty of discussion in smaller and larger groups.</p> <p>After that the plenary session was on cooperation between social partners. Short discussions between representatives of the employers (Rebekah Smith) and employees (Laurent Vogel) was interspersed with three practical examples of this cooperation: reducing fine dust at Copenhagen Airport, non-carcinogenic solutions for controlling a beetle on trees and reducing the exposure to carcinogens in paving operations. The day ended with seven parallel sessions, all of which shed light on an aspect of setting limit values.</p> <p><i>EU Roadmap</i></p> <p>The future was the subject of the final day of the conference with presentations of various Dutch and European authorities on possible measures to reduce work-related cancer. This ultimately resulted in the launch of the new 'EU Roadmap on Carcinogens (external link). "Six organizations, including EU-OSHA, the European Commission and the European social partners signed an agreement to participate in a new roadmap for a settlement to reduce exposure to carcinogens in the workplace. The conference assembled an electronic journal in which to find much information. This "magazine on the spot" can be found via this link<a href="http://www.magazine-on-the-spot.nl/pwrc/index.html">http://www.magazine-on-the-spot.nl/pwrc/index.html</a></p>
	<p><b>Modernet Membership and fee</b></p> <p><b>Modernet is an international membership association, in which members are individual persons - involved in work or dedicated to research into the objectives of Modernet.</b></p> <p>Modernet has three classes of members: "Professional," "Emeritus," and "Student".</p> <p><b>Professional Membership:</b> any person involved in work dedicated to the objectives of Modernet. Each Professional Member shall pay annual dues as established in accordance with these statutes. Each Professional Member shall have one vote on all matters on which members are entitled to vote, and shall be eligible to hold office.</p> <p><b>Emeritus Membership:</b> any person who was formerly involved in work dedicated to the objectives of Modernet, who is currently retired and not employed on a full-time basis. Each Emeritus Member shall pay annual dues as established in accordance with these statutes. Each Emeritus Member shall have one vote on all matters on which members are entitled to vote, and shall be eligible to hold office.</p> <p><b>Student Membership:</b> any person enrolled in a higher education program who has an interest in promoting the purpose of the organization as set forth in these statutes. Each Student Member shall pay annual dues as established in accordance with these statutes. Each Student Member shall have one vote on all matters on which members are entitled to vote, and shall be eligible to hold office.</p>

Any person who shall, upon application, show active employment, affiliation or matriculation and provide payment of dues, may become a member of the appropriate class.

Become a member for **25 euro** per year, running from 1-1 until 31-12  
It has to be paid into the Modernet bank account

Here you can find all the information on membership of  
Modernet <http://modernet.org/content/membership>

Here you can register as a member <http://modernet.org/content/modernet-membership-registration-form>

Here you can find our statutes <http://modernet.org/content/modernet-statutes>

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