

Blog: How to tackle chemicals of high concern in products – The construction sector as a case study

In this modern world an important part of the population spends most of its time in dwellings, from our homes, over many workplaces to gym rooms and conference rooms. Already in the eighties there were discussions on the sick-building syndrome. The European Commission's Joint Research Centre hosted the European Collaborative Action (ECA) Indoor Air Quality and its impact on man. This ECA has been implementing a multidisciplinary collaboration and the ultimate goal was the provision of healthy and environmentally sustainable buildings. The scope became even broader by putting emphasis on the links between indoor and outdoor air quality and the ECA was renamed "Urban air, Indoor Environment and Human Exposure".

Although there are many aspects on indoor air quality going from biological and chemical indoor pollutants, over energy use and ventilation, the panel will focus on the contribution from chemicals from building products.

In the late nineties the German Environment Agency launched the Committee for Health-related Evaluation of Building Products and developed the AgBB evaluation scheme, which is making use of Lowest Concentration of Interest (LCI) values. Since then other legislative initiatives were launched in different countries in Europe and this resulted in a harmonisation framework for health based evaluation of indoor emissions from construction products in the European Union using the EU-LCI concept.

Stylianos Kephelopoulos from the European Commission – Joint Research Centre will introduce to you the European scene. Christine Däumling from the German Environment Agency will explain the German activities. Paolo Carrer from the Milan University will give you the academic view. Eva-Lena Carlen-Johansson from Skanska will explain why they want to become the leading green project developer and construction company. Anne-Sofie Andersson from ChemSec will give the NGO perspective and how substitution will contribute.

The debate will focus on questions such as:

- Is the health based approach preferable over a hazard based approach?
- Are the existing national initiatives enough to be protective for the European Union?
- Should the national initiatives be harmonised?
- Are we on the right track and can we achieve the SAICM objectives to minimize the adverse effects of man-made chemicals on humans and the environment for the construction sector?
- Can we learn from construction products for other sectors?

Erwin Annys, Director Chemicals Policy, CEFIC

The Panel about "How to tackle chemicals of high concern in products" will take place on Friday 27th May 2016 in Helsinki Chemicals Forum. You are also welcome to join the conversation on Twitter @ChemicalsForum.