

A focus on research and education tools in environmental toxicology and chemistry

Christian Mougín, Wilfried SANCHEZ

Thursday May 26, 8:15 AM - 10:15 AM, Salle G+H

Currently, it is of increasing importance to organize and share the knowledge on research and educational opportunities and facilities in the fields of environmental toxicology and chemistry within the community of European ecotoxicologists.

The session will present the recent developments in European countries concerning these fields. It will present:

- the most relevant networks and means, involved in the coordination, the planning and the investment in research and training,
- the main research infrastructures, major devices and technical platforms for research, including data storage and management, that can be offered to ecotoxicologists,
- the educational and training programs in the fields covered by SETAC, as well as webinars,
- the presentation of international research programs, including European opportunities.

We welcome presentations concerning all these topics, and hope fruitful exchanges between scientists.

Communicating research findings and uncertainties: Strategies, tools, and new platforms for environmental sciences

Thomas-Benjamin Seiler, Leonie Nuesser, Mattia Meli, Erica K Brockmeier

Wednesday May 25, 5:30 PM - 6:00 PM, Exhibition Hall (Poster Corner)

This session is aimed at communication from inside research institutions to the general public. As a target group for science and especially risk communication the general public is quite diverse in terms of their position and function in the course of communication. On the one hand they are recipients of such information, but on the other hand they are also processing information and acting as multipliers. In addition, as news consumers they can influence the headlines of mass media, which is a new development alongside the increasing extensity of social web usage. And last not least, the general public can have impact on political decision processes when acting as concerned voters.

Hence, proper communication of environmental research, risks and issues to the general public is both very important and quite challenging. Misunderstanding will lead to false knowledge, and thus it might decrease success of communicating findings or benefits and risks as well as raise wrong concerns.

Therefore in particular environmental scientists require good knowledge about how to communicate with the general public, and that is why research on this topic seems an important aspect of environmental sciences.

Our session invites communication scientists and experts to share their specific knowledge and help other researchers to learn about the do's and don'ts, the pros and cons, the must-haves and no-gos in science and risk communication. Contributions could, e.g., present current research results, review existing concepts and strategies, introduce forthcoming projects, critically discuss state-of-the-art and point out problems, and deliver possible solutions. We seek to initiate a lively discussion between the presenters and the audience. Listeners are encouraged to report their own cases, issues or experiences.

How can we improve the link between academic research and policy-making in order to advance chemical risk assessment and management?

Zhanyun Wang, Martin Scheringer, Thomas Backhaus

Thursday May 26, 10:50 AM - 12:50 PM, Salle G+H

For decades, science and policy have been closely linked in chemical risk assessment and management; i.e., policy influenced the production and stabilization of scientific knowledge and scientific knowledge simultaneously supported and justified policy. Learning from the initiation and implementation of the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, this co-production of science and policy has been a key success factor in identifying and addressing chemical-related issues: evidence from exploratory research can grow stronger if the policy context is "right," and, similarly, a weak policy context can become stronger if confirmatory evidence is produced. However, increasingly divergent developments challenge the connections between science and policy making. In particular, the rapidly growing complexity in both areas requires a more and more extensive learning of each other's context, which is often neglected in view of tight deadlines and an increasing specialization of the participants. Furthermore, the exponential increase in global and local knowledge and information creates yet another challenge for establishing and safeguarding communication between scientists and policy makers. To date, most scientific studies focus on cutting-edge questions in highly specific aspect(s) of an issue (a particular chemical, emission pathway, ecotoxicological endpoint, etc). In contrast, policymakers need to find, select and integrate a wide range of knowledge, not only from natural sciences but also from e.g. social sciences, economics and law, in order to obtain a broad overview of the issue at hand. The resulting disconnect between science and policy-making leads to unnecessary delays. For example, first scientific evidence of the high persistence and possible adverse effects of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) were reported already in the 1960s. However, most countries started to assess and regulate these substances only after the turn of the millennium and in many countries, emissions are still ongoing. A similar disconnect is obvious in the heated debates on endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) and neonicotinoid insecticides.

This session intends to provide a platform for analyzing the possibilities for improving the challenging, but urgently needed, dialogue between the scientific and regulatory communities. We invite scientists as well as policy makers and communication experts to share demands and concerns from past and present experiences on the communication between science and policy, i.e. how, when and what to communicate to whom. In particular, this session intends to explore existing and upcoming tools and instruments to strengthen the communication between science and policy.