



**FORUM V**  
**Chemical Safety**  
**for Sustainable Development**  
**IFCS**  
Budapest, Hungary  
25-29 September 2006

## **Plenary Information/Discussion Session on Tools and Approaches for Applying Precaution in the Context of Chemicals Safety**

### **Information Request for Background Paper**

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Dear Colleague,

A Forum V Plenary Open Information/Discussion Session has been organized to advance open dialogue and understanding about how precaution is applied in practice with regards to chemical safety to protect health and environment and implementation of goals identified in IFCS declarations and recommendations and the SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS). A Forum V Thought Starter paper presents the rationale, objectives and organization of the session.<sup>1</sup>

Through a series of practical case examples, the session will explore tools and approaches for applying precaution in chemical safety decision-making as well as commonalities and differences in these approaches. Following these presentations, guided discussion with delegates will occur, with the goal of identifying some key commonalities and differences in approaches and providing practical next steps for the future.

To ensure adequate thinking occurs in individual countries before the start of Forum V and thoughtful discussion at the Forum, an Information Background Document will be provided to delegates in advance of Forum V. This Backgrounder Document will summarize information collected on how governments and other organizations domestically apply precaution in chemicals management including:

- A collection of structured information requested from governments and organizations to provide examples of tools and frameworks for how they have applied precaution in the context of domestic chemicals safety efforts.
- Interviews with selected active members in IFCS to understand differences in how precaution is applied and some of the controversies in its application; how they are applying precaution in chemicals management including tools and approaches and the types of tools and processes that would support precautionary decision-making in the context of chemicals management.

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<sup>1</sup> Thought Starter: Forum V Plenary Open Information/Discussion Session On Tools And Approaches For Applying Precaution In The Context Of Chemicals Safety, Prepared By: Forum Standing Committee (IFCS/FORUM-V/01-TS  
[http://www.who.int/ifcs/documents/forums/forum5/meet\\_docs/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/ifcs/documents/forums/forum5/meet_docs/en/index.html) )

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## Information Request

The purpose of this structured information collection process is to collect examples of tools, approaches and frameworks for applying precaution (or making decisions in the face of uncertainty) with regards to national chemical safety efforts. The goal is to understand similarities and differences in how precautionary decisions (or decisions in circumstances of uncertainty) are made across countries; what tools and approaches countries use to apply precaution in chemicals management; how policy, regulatory and scientific processes support precautionary decision-making in the context of chemicals management; the challenges and needs for applying precaution in the context of chemicals management; and varying perceptions with its application.

This information will be collected via the template questionnaire (Annex) which consists of specific and more open-ended questions. We ask that you fill in the template as thoroughly as possible. *Please provide any links or additional supporting materials that provide information on particular policies, tools, or activities.*

### Process of soliciting information

The request for information submissions is being sent to the entire IFCS mailing list. Submissions are welcomed from everyone and government staff are encouraged to coordinate submissions through the IFCS National Focal Point (see IFCS website for list of designated NFP: <http://www.who.int/ifcs/focalpoints/en/>).

We ask that submissions be returned by **20 July 2006**. Please return completed form to:

**IFCS Secretariat**  
**Email: [ifcs@who.int](mailto:ifcs@who.int)**  
**Fax: +41 22 791 4875**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this important effort.

Sincerely,

Joel A. Tickner, ScD  
Special Advisor, IFCS  
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## Annex

**IFCS Forum V**  
**Plenary Information/Discussion Session on Tools and Approaches for**  
**Applying Precaution in the Context of Chemicals Safety**  
  
**Information Request for Background Paper**  
  
**Structured Questionnaire**

### Background Information

Country: CYPRUS

Ministry/Agency/Institute/Organization: Department of Labour Inspection,  
Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance

Contact Person: Dr Tasoula Kyprianidou-Leodidou (Mrs)

Contact Details: Labour Inspection Officer,

Mailing address:  
12, Apelli str., 1493 Nicosia, Cyprus

Email: [tkyprianidou@dli.mlsi.gov.cy](mailto:tkyprianidou@dli.mlsi.gov.cy)

*For telephone and fax numbers, please indicate country and city codes:*

Tel : +35722405608      Fax : +35722663788

**Please submit completed questionnaire by 20 July 2006 to:**

**IFCS Secretariat**  
**Email: [ifcs@who.int](mailto:ifcs@who.int)**  
**Fax: +41 22 791 4875**

**Please note: Unless you indicate otherwise in your response, these submissions will be posted on the IFCS website.**

*Please provide any links or additional supporting materials that provide additional information on particular policies, tools, or activities.*

**National chemicals policy or management:**

1. How is the concept of precaution explicitly or implicitly (in terms of decision-making under conditions of uncertainty) incorporated in national chemicals policy or management in your country/organization?

*Please check all that apply.*

- |                                                                        |                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| In the country constitution ?                                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| In legislation?                                                        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| In agency/ministry/organization policy?                                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| In specific guidance documents for risk assessment or risk management? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Applied in specific cases but no particular policy?                    | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Not applied at all?                                                    | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

Please provide greater detail (1 para).

The existing legislation on chemicals management and control in Cyprus consists of the Dangerous Substances Laws of 2002 to 2004 and the respective Dangerous Substances (Classification, Packaging and Labeling of Dangerous Substances and Preparations) Regulations of 2002 to 2005.

**The abovementioned legislative pieces transpose the provisions of the respective European Directives that provide for the effective management and control of dangerous substances and preparations and introduce all the precautionary principles in the system of chemicals management.**

**Tools and approaches for applying precaution:**

2. What are some of the key tools and approaches used by your country/organization in applying precaution (or making decisions in circumstances of uncertainty) in the context of chemicals safety?

**As part of its public campaign to increase the awareness of producers, distributors and the general public on the provisions of the legislation on classification, packaging and labeling of dangerous substances and preparations, the Department of Labour Inspection, in collaboration with the employers' and employees' organisations, is organising various seminars and is publishing information material.**

- a. Is there a defined approach to applying precaution or decision-making under uncertainty?

Yes  No

If yes, can you outline the elements of that approach or provide references to it?

- b. Is precaution integrated in other decision-making processes, tools and approaches such as;

*Please check all that apply.*

- Data collection?
- Prioritization of substances for risk management actions
- Uncertainty characterization?
- Socio-economic analysis (e.g., social impact, proportionality/cost-benefit assessment, trade concern)?
- Risk assessment and risk management options?
- Screening, comparison of alternatives, informed substitution?
- Stakeholder and Public involvement?
- Other

For those boxes checked, please briefly provide greater detail or links to additional information.

**The Department of Labour Inspection is placing risk assessment on the top of its priorities. Information on the legislation and the practices applied by the Department of Labour Inspection are available at its website at:**

<http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/dli>

**and the respective European organizations websites (OSHA, ECB, etc)**

- c. How are gaps in knowledge addressed?

*Please check all that apply.*

- Though conservative risk assessment assumptions
- Through safety factors
- Through modeling techniques

- Through an assumption that lack of information is indication of potential harm
- Through requesting additional research
- Gaps are not addressed

For those boxes checked, please briefly provide greater detail or links to additional information.

**Any gap in knowledge is considered as an indication of potential hazard and therefore the case is accordingly treated.**

3. Please provide details of a particular case (or example) where precaution was applied (or decisions made in the face of uncertainty) in the context of chemicals management?

During the precautionary measures taken in the accidental release of ammonia from a refrigerating plant, it had been assumed that the worst possible scenarios were applying and therefore the actions taken were accordingly organized.

- a. What stimulated/initiated the precaution process/action?

*Please check all that apply.*

- Government concern over hazards and/or exposures
- Stakeholder concerns over the particular threat
- International policy requirements/pressures
- Negative impacts/experience(s) from not acting on a previous chemical risk
- Other

For those boxes checked, please briefly provide greater detail or links to additional information.

**The Department of Labour Inspection as part of its effort to effectively implement the legislation on health and safety at work and management and control of dangerous chemical substances and preparations is placing risk assessment principles on the top of its priorities.**

- b. What process was used to make the decision? (please briefly describe the process or tools used to make the decision)

**Use of existing scientific information**

c. Were there positive or negative impacts of this process/action?

*Please check all that apply.*

<u>Positive</u>		<u>Negative</u>	
Ecological or Health benefits	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ecological or health impacts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economic benefit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Economic impacts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved government/industry image	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Substitutes/alternatives did not work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved government/public morale	<input type="checkbox"/>	Negative public reaction	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improvements to scientific tools/decision processes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other?	<input type="checkbox"/>		

For those boxes checked, please briefly provide greater detail or links to additional information.

**Generally there is a positive outcome from the actions applied**

d. Were there any unintended consequences from this process/action?

Positive  – please describe

**Positive reaction from the public**

Negative  - please describe

4. Are there any particular cases in your country/organization where precaution was not applied (decisions not made in the face of uncertain chemical risks) resulting in adverse impacts?

Yes  No

If yes, briefly describe if and how decision-making processes have been modified as a result.

5. Does your government have processes in place to re-examine decisions made based on precaution or made in the face of uncertainty as additional data are available?

Yes  No

If yes, briefly describe the process and how this process may be used to modify decisions, decision-making process, or tools.

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**Lessons Learned from applying precaution in chemicals management**

6. What are some of the biggest challenges to your country's (organization's) application of precaution in the context of chemicals management or in chemicals management decision-making in the face of uncertainty?

*Please check all that apply.*

- Scientific capacity
- Lack of scientific information
- Legal challenges
- Technical challenges
- Financial challenges
- Trade Challenges
- Other?

For those checked boxes, please briefly indicate what were the implications of these barriers and how have they been addressed or if not yet addressed, how could they be addressed?

**Lack of scientific information is the result of the missing information on the risks of various chemicals and the uncompleted risks assessments for various High Production Volume Chemicals.**

Are these challenges also applicable to decision-making and actions regarding established risks?

Yes  No

## Next steps

7. What are the most important needs of your country or organization for more effectively applying precaution (or making decisions in the face of uncertainty) and overcoming barriers in chemicals management decision-making?

*Please check all that apply.*

- Data on chemical toxicity/risks
- Tools for prioritization
- Tools for risk assessment
- Decision-making tools/frameworks
- Technical assistance in risk assessment processes
- Technical assistance in risk management processes
- Financial support for implementation
- International dialogue
- Information sharing to facilitate understanding of the issues
- Other

For those boxes checked, please briefly provide greater detail or links to additional information.

**The collection of data on chemical toxicity/risks is part of the EU policy for gathering more information on priority chemical substances, for chemicals that are produced or imported in high quantities and for chemicals of high risk.**

8. Briefly describe your perceptions as to some of the concerns regarding application of precaution in the context of chemicals safety?

*Please briefly provide details or links to additional information.*

9. Do you have any additional information on tools and approaches for applying precaution that would be helpful to inform discussion?

*Please provide any additional materials or web links.*

**NO**

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**Please note: Unless you indicate otherwise in your response, your submission and those of others will be posted on the IFCS website.**