

# PRESS RELEASE

Biothreats, i.e emerging infections, pandemics and terrorist actions increase the demand to handle hazardous microorganisms in laboratories. Considerable proliferation of sophisticated containment laboratories is seen even in societies with no or little knowledge how to operate such facilities. Serious infections (Ebola, SARS, Legionella) occur in laboratory staff at an unacceptable rate.

BIOSAFETY-EUROPE (B-E) is a Coordinated Action funded by the EC through the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme. It explored the implementation of European Directives concerning biosafety and biosecurity practices within Europe which aim to reduce accidental and terrorist-led exposure of workers and the environment to dangerous pathogens and Genetically Modified Microorganisms (GMMs). B-E presented findings and recommendations to the EC in front of European stakeholders and the World Health Organisation.

B-E recommendations to the EC include: Adoption of a consistent terminology for biosafety levels, regular updating of the classification list of microorganisms and guidance on suitable efficient and cost-effective technical safety measures. Safety measures must be determined by evidence-based risk assessment and should not hinder the exchange of scientific personnel, data and knowledge.

Further recommendations are that organizations handling biological agents, GMMs and toxins should identify competent advice commensurate to risks and maintain an up-to-date inventory of their culture collections. National authorities should be required to collate data on laboratory-acquired infections.

Training in biosafety and biosecurity is an area where deficiencies were identified; courses in biosafety and biosecurity should be promoted throughout the EU and the requirements for competency of biosafety/biosecurity professionals should be set out in legislation.

Finally, a Europe-wide platform should be initiated for the exchange of knowledge between biosafety professionals from high containment facilities and biosafety and biosecurity legislators and regulators.

A safe and secure handling of hazardous microorganisms is of utmost importance for the sake of public health, life science research and industry.

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