



INDOOR AIR TOXICOLOGY

16–18TH SEPTEMBER 2018

International Conference on Risk Assessment of Indoor Air Chemicals

Axel Vorwerk: Welcome

Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), Germany

Dear Ms Busse, dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to see that so many experts followed our invitation to Berlin to participate in this international meeting - even on a Sunday! It shows how much we all care about indoor air quality.

Ms. Busse has already given you an overview of the activities carried out by Environment Agency. The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, - for which I am speaking today -- is co-hosting this conference. But it was a team from UBA which has taken care of all the preparatory work. And therefore I would like to extend a big THANK YOU to Marike Kolossa and her team, in particular Ms. Debiak, who have put this conference together.

Indoor air – as you have just heard – concerns our everyday life.

Every room, every user, every source and every contaminant is different. The risks differ and thus the solutions as well.

And complex systems do not allow simple solutions.

Ms. Busse already mentioned that regulating this complex system is a tricky task. There are too many components and too many actors that ultimately determine indoor air quality in a given room. We have building products, furniture and decorative items that cause emissions. We have beloved habits such as burning candles or incense that increase indoor air pollution. We have people that think that opening windows is a luxury that they cannot afford, particularly in winter.

This is why we have found it impossible to draft regulation that enforces general standards that are sound, justifiable and that don't restrict one's privacy. So we looked for other solutions.

And we thought that we had found a great way to - at least - limit emissions from building products. Ms. Busse already mentioned the so-called AgBB scheme that became mandatory for building products through the "National Technical Approvals". And it worked! But only until the European Court of Justice found in 2016 that it inhibited trade.



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The Court wiped away the results of many years of good work.

Now, we – like all other EU Member States – can only apply harmonized European standards to construction products in order to determine and control their quality characteristics. Well, good luck with that, since we don't have any EU emission standards, yet. Any building products that bear the simple CE-marking can be freely traded - regardless of the emissions they cause.

UBA has our full support in its work towards a much-needed system of harmonized EU emission standards. And I gladly take the opportunity to thank all the members of the relevant EU-Working Group for their important work.

Building products are only part of the problem. A long time ago, the EU Commission had its own indoor air quality expert group. It made sure that the Commission was aware of the full range of indoor air issues. And in the Commission itself there was a dedicated work unit that was in charge. Not anymore.

So - who makes sure that research on indoor air is properly covered by EU research programmes? And who makes sure that there is a meaningful exchange of experts on the EU level? You know the answer. ..

That makes it even more important that individual member states are active in this field. And it is UBA and its expert panels that do a lot of excellent work on indoor air quality in Germany. Thank you to all of those involved. Many contributors to this work are here today.

Before I close I would like to touch upon the topic of environmental justice. It is not one that you necessarily connect with indoor air quality. But there is an important connection between the two. The poorer tend to live under worse housing conditions. They tend to know less on how to avoid indoor air problems. They are more exposed to dampness and mould in their homes. They tend to live closer to heavily used roads.

It needs to be an important aspect of our work to be aware of these factors. We need to take extra efforts to make sure that the benefits of our work are equally useful for all citizens.

So after all this, I am looking forward to the presentation by Pawel Wargocki. I am wishing all of us a fruitful and interesting exchange tonight and further on.

Thank you for your attention.