

## Information Sheet for blood sampling

### Dear participants,

You recently participated in the interview that is part of the German Environmental Survey for Adults - GerES VI. As described in detail in the survey information, we are using this survey to research which potentially harmful substances and environmental impacts people in this country come into contact with. To help us with this endeavour, we are asking for your continued cooperation by providing us with a blood sample and enabling us to measure your blood pressure. Your blood sample will also be tested for environmental pollutants alongside your urine sample.

### What is the objective of GerES VI?

We require reliable pollution data in order to protect people from negative environmental impacts. As part of GerES VI, we will be testing **samples** of drinking water, dust, and air, as well as of your urine and **blood for environmental pollutants**, and analysing them together with questionnaires and general environmental data relevant to where you live.

This survey will help to ensure that action to reduce and prevent pollution can be taken.

By participating, you personally are making an important contribution to protecting the environment and health.

### Who conducts the German Environmental Survey and how is it financed?

The German Environment Agency is the central environmental protection authority in Germany and is conducting GerES VI. The German Environment Agency has commissioned Diamond (KH) Germany HoldCo GmbH, a subsidiary of Cerner Deutschland GmbH, to perform the GerES VI fieldwork.

Both Cerner Deutschland GmbH and Diamond (KH) Germany HoldCo GmbH belong to the Oracle Corporation group of companies.

Oracle Life Sciences is a Diamond (KH) Germany HoldCo GmbH brand and is used in the text below and in communications (e.g., e-mail addresses).

GerES VI's fieldwork essentially involves interviews and sampling at your home. To enable coordination and performance of these tasks, Oracle Life Sciences is partnering

with various companies that have many years of experience in specific areas. The interviewers and the medical professionals who carry out the interviews and sampling are employed by Infratrend Forschung GmbH and Verian.

Furthermore, the German Environment Agency has commissioned specialised laboratories to measure pollutant levels in the samples.

GerES VI is financed by the German Environment Agency and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection.

You can find out which companies process and store your data and for what purpose in the green-shaded section on data protection starting on page 4.

## What is the blood sampling procedure?

The plan is to take blood from a vein in the crook of your arm. A maximum of 60 ml is to be taken. Your blood pressure will also be measured and you will be asked a few questions that are important for the blood test. The visit by the medical staff will take about half an hour in total.

We then conduct chemical analyses on the blood samples taken. As part of this process, we identify environmental pollutants that can affect health, such as heavy metals, perfluorinated and polyfluorinated chemicals, and pesticides. We also measure some clinical parameters, e.g., cholesterol content and triglycerides, which are important for the scaling of pollutants in the blood.

If you provide us with your consent, your samples can be analysed for other environmental chemicals after the survey has been completed, either by us or by German and international scientific collaborative partners.

## What are the benefits for you?

Upon request, you will receive an **environmental medical assessment** of your metrics, provided assessment criteria are available for them. This will tell you whether they are unusually high, based on current scientific knowledge, or even give reason for health concerns.

### All analyses are free of charge to you!

The analyses are conducted in specialist laboratories and are not part of the normal examination programme offered by medical practices. They are **very extensive and time-consuming**, meaning we can only provide you with the results **after about four to six months**.

As a **thank you** for giving blood, you will receive **€10** in addition to the €20 expense allowance you have already received for participating in the survey.

## What are the possible risks for you?

Taking a blood sample is associated with low risks for you. Occasionally, haematomas (bruises) may occur as a result of blood sampling. Infections at the puncture site are rare. Very rarely, drowsiness, faintness, and a brief loss of consciousness, as well as the formation of blood clots can occur. Also very rarely, nerves can be injured during blood sampling. The ramifications of such very rare consequences of blood sampling may include permanent pain, sensory disturbances (paraesthesia) and functional impairments.

## What are the exclusion and termination criteria?

An individual blood sample cannot be taken if

- you withdraw your consent or
- if you suffer from haemophilia or
- if there are other reasons (to be assessed by the medical staff) for termination.

## Is participation voluntary?

### Can I rescind it?

Your participation in GerES VI and the blood sampling associated with the survey are **voluntary and free of charge**. You will not be disadvantaged in any way if you do not participate.

Even if you have given your consent, you can withdraw from participating in the survey, even partially, at any time without giving reasons. We will then no longer contact you in the future and will delete your name, address and contact details from the protected personal file.

Furthermore, if you request us to do so, we will also delete the data collected to date and destroy your samples. However, once we have deleted your address data, it is no longer possible to delete your survey data and destroy your samples, as they have then already been anonymised.

Even if you revoke your consent, you will not be disadvantaged in any way.

Please send any revocation either in writing to:

**German Environmental Survey for Adults GerES VI**

German Environment Agency (UBA)  
Corrensplatz 1  
14195 Berlin

Or by phone or e-mail to the GerES hotline staff at Telquest GmbH:

Phone: 0800 1121 139  
E-mail: GerES@telquest.de

## Am I insured during my participation in the survey?

The medical professionals visiting you at home are covered by (professional) liability insurance through Infratrend Forschung GmbH. The Federal Republic of Germany, represented by the German Environment Agency, is liable according to the principle of self-insurance. This means, that the Federation generally does not enter insurance contracts with third parties and bears liability for damage caused to persons or objects with federal budget funds (principle of self-coverage). The liability conforms to statutory regulations, specifically those regulations laid down in the German Civil Code (Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch, BGB).

## Data protection and data handling

The information you provide and the results of the analyses are treated as strictly confidential by all German Environment Agency staff involved in the survey and by the companies and institutes commissioned to conduct the survey and analyse the samples. No one can tell from the analyses which person provided the information.

The German Environment Agency's data protection officer has been informed about the project. We follow their recommendations.

All persons involved in conducting the survey are obliged to comply with the relevant data protection laws.

For as long as your data and samples can be matched to you personally, you have the right at any time to view all the information of yours that we store, to revoke your consent to the storage of data and to demand the destruction of your blood samples. You can contact the data protection officer at any time.

## How is your data encrypted?

In accordance with data protection regulations, your data will be encrypted (pseudonymised) using a random 6-digit participant number that does not contain any personal details that can reveal your identity.

## What happens to your address data?

Your name, address, details concerning your age, gender and nationality and, if available, telephone numbers as well as, in case you provide these to us, your e-mail address, further telephone numbers and details concerning your availability, will only be available for the purposes and duration of the survey, i.e., until approximately the end of 2025, to Oracle Life Sciences (Diamond (KH) Germany HoldCo GmbH, Landsberger Straße 284, 80687 Munich, Germany) and its subcontractors. In addition to Oracle Life Sciences, the following companies are also processors of your data:

- Verian (company name: Mantle Germany GmbH), Landsberger Str. 284, 80687 Munich, Germany: this company is involved in liaison with the residents' registration offices and receives your contact details from them, so that we can send you an invitation letter. Furthermore, Verian digitally manages your pseudonymised interview and test data (called survey data). Verian is also the recipient of the completed paper questionnaires that you send by post. In addition, Verian provides some of the field staff (e.g., contact persons or interviewers).
- Infratrend Forschung GmbH, Aubinger Str. 105a, 81243 Munich, Germany: prepares, prints, and sends the invitation letters and the sampling parcel to you.

It requires your address to do this. This company also hires most of the field staff. This includes the contact persons, the interviewers, and the medical professionals. Infratrend Forschung GmbH will therefore need your contact details for the two visits to your home. The interviewers and the medical professionals who visit you at home collect your pseudonymised survey data. For quality assurance purposes, Infratrend accompanies the field staff to your home in individual cases.

- Telquest GmbH: this company manages the telephone hotline and e-mail address, which have been set up specifically to answer your questions and to make appointments, and receives your reply card for making appointments by post. As part of making an appointment, Telquest GmbH processes your contact details. Telquest GmbH also assists Verian in liaising with the residents' registration offices and therefore has access to your contact details, which are provided by the residents' registration offices.
- RB Profi-Kontor GmbH, Einhausstrasse 1, 56459 Langenhahn, Germany: this company digitises your paper questionnaires and then destroys them. The paper questionnaires contain your survey data, but no contact details, only the participant number.

To visualise this, please see figure 2 of the insert to the survey information.

After the survey has been completed and analysed and its findings reported to the German Environment Agency, Oracle Life Sciences will delete your personal data at the end of the contract (October 2025 at the latest), and will also ensure that its contract data processors have deleted all personal and survey data of GerES VI participants after the end of the contract between Oracle Life Sciences and the German Environment Agency. The signed consent forms, from which names and participant numbers have been removed or deleted, will be handed over to the German Environment Agency and stored there for 10 years, in order to be able to prove that each participant consented to take part in the survey, even after the survey has ended.

Only your participant number is stated on the blood sampling questionnaire, the measurement logs and sample containers. The laboratories that carry out the pollutant analyses are only aware of this participant number.

We keep your address data and the geo-coordinates of your residential address in a specially protected place, separate from the questionnaire and analysis data. We only combine your address data with the analysis data once, to enable us to send you your pollutant metrics.

After completion of the survey, we will also irrevocably delete your address data and only keep your survey data under the participant number.

We permanently store the geo-coordinates of your residential address in a specially protected manner to enable us, at a later date, to link general environmental data with data specific to where you live.

Once we have deleted your address data, it is no longer possible to delete your survey data or destroy your samples.

Your address data will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent.

## How is your data analysed?

All survey data collected as part of GerES VI is only stored and analysed in encrypted form. The scientific staff who carry out the analyses usually only know the participant numbers. During data collection (field time) and subsequent data checking, there will be exceptions (individual persons) who have access to both personal and survey data. This applies in particular to staff who visit you at home to take fine dust measurements and conduct mould detection inspections using sniffer dogs, provided that you have been selected for this purpose, and who draft your notification of findings. In total, there are 8 people at the German Environment Agency who have access to both your survey data and your address data. This is necessary to ensure that the data is always accessible, even in the event of staff absences. The analysis tables combine the data of so many people, meaning no one can be identified.

By participating, you are providing valuable data about your health. Analysing this data together with pollutant metrics enables us to investigate correlations between environmental pollution and health complaints.

The German Environment Agency conducts all analyses itself or cooperates with public research institutions. For this purpose, the German Environment Agency makes participants' survey data available to its collaborative partners and the wider scientific community in the form of data pools. These do not contain any information that allows conclusions to be drawn about individuals.

## What further use will be made of your survey data and samples?

You can specify further uses of your samples and data in the consent form that you sign before the blood sample is taken.

You can leave your blood samples with the German Environment Agency on a permanent basis, so that they can be analysed in terms of further issues at the German Environment Agency or by German and international collaborative partners. You will not receive any notification of your individual results from these future research projects.

You may consent to the German Environment Agency sharing your survey data obtained when samples of your blood are taken with German and international partners and governmental organisations for further analysis and policy advice. You may also consent to the storage of your survey data in comprehensive databases. In all disclosures, we take care to ensure that no inference can be made about individuals. However, a small residual risk of identification due to the volume of data cannot be completely ruled out.

We review each proposal in detail before we make any further use of your blood samples and associated survey data for research and policy advice purposes.

Commercial use of data and samples or disclosure to health and other insurers is categorically ruled out.

## If you still have any questions,

you are entitled at any time to ask the medical professional questions about any matter relating to the survey, particularly about possible risks.

Please address your questions to the medical professional visiting you.

**I have read and understood the Blood Sampling Consent Form and have discussed any questions with the medical professional. I have received a copy of the information sheet and the Blood Sampling Consent Form. The original of these two documents shall remain in the custody of the German Environment Agency.**

\_\_\_\_\_,  
Place

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Surname, first name in block capitals

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IDNR