



EUROPEAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRY COUNCIL

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Cefic's LONG RANGE RESEARCH INITIATIVE TO SPONSOR € 23 MILLION IN HUMAN HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH**

**Brussels, 21 November 2002** – Scientists gathered today at Cefic LRI's Fourth Members Workshop discussed significant new findings in research on the potential impact of chemicals on human health and the environment. The Long-range Research Initiative, LRI, programme will be funding €23 million in new human health and risk assessment research over the period 2002-2005.

The workshop, which was inaugurated by Mike Buzzacott, VP of BP Chemicals and member of Cefic's Research & Science Board, introduced findings from several independent projects funded through LRI, which has gained broad recognition from policy makers and non-industry organisations. "LRI's multi-stakeholder process and relevance make it effective in addressing key issues related to policy making," said Kees van Leeuwen, from the Institute for Health and Consumer Protection of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. "As a next step, the industry should anticipate the science needs of policy decisions and broadly communicate the outcomes of its programmes stakeholders." Several other stakeholders were similarly invited to provide their views on the utility of the LRI programme.

Under the initiative, the European chemical industry has funded almost €10 million for research in the areas of human health, environment, risk assessment and endocrine disruption in recent years. LRI Programme Manager Dr. Simon Webb announced at the workshop that Cefic projects an additional €23 million in funding from 2002 to 2005. Over 150 scientists from 90 universities and institutes have been involved in LRI-funded projects, addressing concerns related to chemicals and representing the industry's contribution to improving knowledge about their impact.

Several presentations at the workshop revealed the latest results in diverse areas such as genotoxins, allergenic substances, environmental persistence of chemicals and endocrine disruption. Dr Gernot Klotz from Bayer and Chair of Cefic's Endocrine Modulators Study Group (EMSG) Project Team discussed on-going LRI projects in the area of endocrine disruption. Highlighted was the commitment to support the development and validation of OECD endocrine disruptor tests illustrated by the recent allocation of €470,000 to the validation of the Hershberger assay. Similarly, Dr Chris Money of Exxon Mobil Chemicals and Chair of LRI's Human Health Project Team presented several new projects on characterising human exposure to chemicals at renowned scientific institutions across Europe – including EU accession countries. Prof Anders Ekbohm from the Karolinska Institute in Sweden detailed preliminary results from an epidemiological study on testicular cancer and male genital malformations. The study highlights how the incidence of testicular cancer has increased markedly in certain Scandinavian countries over the last 50 years. According to the research, links with environmental contaminants such as DDT were dismissed on the basis of declining concentrations of these substances in the mothers' breast milk over the same period. By contrast, data suggests that boys born to mothers who smoke have a one-and-a-half to two-and-a quarter times higher risk of developing testicular cancer. "Differences in smoking habits in women over time can explain both temporal trends and geographic differences in the incidence of testicular cancer," Professor Ekbohm concluded.

*The LRI programme is a global initiative of the chemical industry that sets out to identify and fill gaps in our understanding of the hazards posed by chemicals and to improve the techniques available for assessing the associated risks. The International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) provides global coordination for the LRI.*

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