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Subject: ecopa messenger - #00-2004,

This newsletter is part of our EU 6th Framework Programme-project CONAM, and it details information of other projects within that EU programme (such as PREDICTOMICS, ReProTect etc.) which were co-initiated and are supported by ecopa.

We have thereby created an information system on alternative method development for the first time in Europe that will, almost in real time, supply the interested organizations, institutions and individuals with the respective information.

As this is the pre-running copy, we have included some basic info also on our technical approach to keep the EU 6th Framework Programme-project teams and the ecopa-Working Groups connected and informed, as immediately and optimally as possible.

If you know other people or institutions interested, have them visit our website and subscribe to this newsletter.

Of course, any proposal or recommendation regarding style, content or distribution of the newsletter is highly welcome and appreciated (bgarthoff@t-online.de)

Bernward Garthoff
Treasurer ecopa
on behalf of the ecopa
Management Board

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Issue # 00 (November 2004)

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General News

ecopa has initiated this year several conferences and workshops which are either part of its general activities within the scope of its past mission (such as the ecopa Annual Workshop - end of November, this time with the topic SCALE), but also part of its now extended spectrum "to revitalize the alternative method-scene".

In that regard, there was an initiative taken together with ECVAM, to activate the stakeholders in the new resp. future member states (link: Prague Workshop – siehe EVENTS) and to form new National Consensus Platforms (NCPs) in these countries.

The first result of this activities is highlighted by preparations for new platforms in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary – others to follow! An idea expands across Europe and gets more and more shape.

Also, this activity of ecopa-members contributes to the CONAM plan and helps fulfill the requests of the EU Commission to involve the new member states and Associate Countries. Beyond this action, the Management Board Members broadened the spectrum of ecopa activities also by addressing toxicologists: by invitation and with the support of the Finnish platform "Fincopa", ecopa organized an extraordinary well-attended symposium at the 10th International Conference on Toxicology (10th ICXT, see link siehe unter NEWS, with the presentations!) in Tampere in July.

This added to the recognition of the 3 Rs-concept within the scientific community and of the potential input alternative methods can offer with in the regulatory framework given. Furthermore, this made ecopa a lot more known in the world of toxicological science and will enable us to further broaden our expert basis.

As an offer by the ecopa Management Board to interested conference organizers and NCPs, we are always willing to support you with presentations on ecopa or alternative method development – please contact us via the ecopa webpage under [contact](#).

Technical Info to use the Forum of ecopa

The Forum Section is now available via the ecopa page or the direct link (<http://ecopa.vub.ac.be/forum/>).

- In regard to EU Project/ecopa Working Groups: to read and post messages in the Forum-section of the ecopa website, the users need to register themselves. After registration (and authorization by Board and Webmaster), each user-address has to be activated for this section.
- In regard to the General Discussion Section: the users need to be registered to post messages in this section, but they can read all posts in here.
- The Forum itself is quite self-explanatory, here's just a short introduction – and in addition you will find a detailed Q+A Section there as well: ([forum FAQ](#))
- After you have registered yourself, click on a section to view or post a message.

- To post a message, click in a section on "new topic". When there already is a message in a section, you can click on "new reply" to directly reply to that message. You can click the button "pm" under a message, to write a private message to the author.
- Go to learn-by-doing, for any other questions or problems you can have a look at the forum-FAQ Section ([forum FAQ](#)) or sent a mail to the Webmaster.

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EU 6th Framework Programme Projects / ecopa Working Groups

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Abstract of the project

The CONAM project is proposed by ecopa. This is the only quadripartite not-for-profit organisation that promotes a consensus strategy for 3R-alternative methods in the EU. Innovative is that the 4 parties having a major interest, animal welfare, industry, government and academia, are equally represented and reach consensus. Actually, national consensus platforms of 10 Member States, 2 Associate States and 2 Associate Candidate Countries are involved.

The objective of CONAM is to build a solid network on 3R-alternatives, ideally including all European countries and with the aim to deliver critical consensus expert opinions on 3R-issues, to draw attention on new alternatives and technologies, to disseminate this information and to initiate collaboration.

Identified priorities are:

- Consensus networking on 3R-alternatives with focus on website expansion, to support existing and new national consensus platforms, to stimulate collaboration and linking in particular with non-EU candidate countries.
- Ethics with emphasis on harmonisation and consensus by analysing and proclaiming shared ethical, legal and societal values, to continue dialogue where others failed and to develop consensus documents with focus on ³omics² technology, access to human data and samples.
- Education activities to support (inter)national training and education of 3R-methods with focus on non-EU candidate countries.
- Legislative issues with emphasis on the EU Chemicals Policy: to harvest relevant information on the translation of the EU White Paper into legislation, to disseminate and discuss among the 4 parties, to come with a consensus paper to advice the EU decision making process. Ecopas networking offers equilibrated, scientifically-sound and technically-relevant expertise and experience. The opportunities of emerging "omics" technologies should be fully explored, including ethical, educational and socio-political impact.

Recent News

- Open vacature for secretary of ecopa. Candidatures to be sent to Vera Rogiers, position immediately available, full-time position at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel for at least 3 years, university diploma requested (politics, PR, Sciences,...) and language and writer skills ([vacancy notice](#))
- CONAM related: Annalaura Stammati has given a presentation on ecopa and its activities in Slovenia ([introduction to ecopa](#)) in order to start up a Slovenian Consensus Platform platform (19 September 2004)
- Annalaura Stammati also has presented IPAM and ECOPA during "Giornata MAPIC 2004: Il futuro degli ingredienti cosmetici nella strategia comunitaria", in Milano , Auditorium Federchimica, on June 17, 2004 MAPIC roughly means Group on raw materials for Cosmetic Industry and Additives for Cosmetic and Pharmaceutic Industry and it belongs to Federchimica.
- CONAM related: Vera Rogiers gives , in order to build up the Polish Consensus Platform POLCOPA (in collaboration with Maciej Stepnik) a presentation on ecopa in Poland, Warsaw on 16 November 2004 . All stakeholders will be present at the meeting.

Report on the first Board, resp. kick off-Meeting of the Working Groups

The first Board and kick off meeting took place in Monheim/Germany on 2004 ([minutes of the 1st board meeting](#)) and was followed by the first meeting of the Working Group representatives on...in Brussels, i.e.:

Prof. V. Rogiers for WG 1 (Organisation/CONAM), Karin Gabrielson for WG2 (Politics and Chemicals), Prof. Cock-Beuning for WG 4 (Ethics).

Also present were Prof. Eugenio Vilanova (substituting for WG 3: Education/Information) and Dres. Simon Webb (LRI of CEFIC), Bernward Garthoff (Treasurer ecopa).

The further programme and project work within ecopa and CONAM was discussed ([Conam WP-Leaders meeting](#)) further adaptations of the current website were proposed, the result of which you can see by now.

In future, the FORUM page for CONAM will also be activated – see above for technical details.

Also, there will be in that place more general information on the CONAM project available, which will not necessarily be referred to by this newsletter – so, check it out ([ecopa forum](#)).

As part of the CONAM project and in responds to the request of the EU, we will give any news, minutes of project (as far as they are non-confidential and non-proprietary) or post relevant info in the respective Forum Section. We will refer to it by use of the Newsletter. Also, as part of ecopa extended mission, we will refer to up coming events such as local workshop, conferences, meetings of the NCPs or ecopa working group etc. on our Website EVENT page, and if appropriate, in this newsletter.

Please supply us with the relevant info when ever deemed useful in your own interest.

Interested to form a new national platform in your country, if not existing?

Please contact us under the CONTACT page.

For an upfront info how to create a platform in your country, and which criteria apply to be official recognized by ecopa, refer to the presentation of José Castell at the Stakeholder Workshop in Prague ([ECVAM/ecopa Stakeholder Workshop](#))

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This 6th FP-project, that ecopa had co-initiated and in which ecopa is represented with 3 members in the Supervising Board including the Chairperson, was started in 2003 with 21 partners.

The overall funding is scheduled to be 9.1 mio €, resp. 13.5 mio €. Contract with the EU was signed on July 1, 2004; the administration is performed by Prof. Michael Schwarz, University of Tübingen.

Abstract of the Project

ReProTect is an Integrated Project of the EU (IP) funded within the 6th Framework Programme. This Integrated Project, putting together 35 different European partners from Academia, SMEs, Governmental Institutes and others intends to explore the most complicate and delicate field of toxicology, the reproductive toxicity. The investigation in this field currently requires substantial number of animals and the main objective of this IP is to reduce this number. The project will drive the R&D toward alternatives to animal tests according to the needs identified, with the main intention to pre-validate and validate the most promising ones.

This represents the ambition of developing a novel approach in hazard and risk assessment of reproductive toxicity, by a combination and application of in vitro, tissue and sensor technologies.

The project will run over 5 years.

Recent News

The kick off meeting and the Supervisory Board-meeting took place in Ispra/Italy at the ECVAM-Location on July 18-21, 2004. (Links not open to the public yet!)

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The ecopa-induced 6th Framework Programme has been started in 2003, with 14 partners, all in all.

The overall funding is scheduled to be 2.3 mio €. Contract with the EU was signed on September 1, 2004; the administration is done by REMA.

Abstract of the project

The development of new pharmaceutical compounds will be more efficient if human relevant toxicology information early in the selection process is available. While acute toxicity can be reasonably detected during the early preclinical stages of drug development, long-term toxicity is more difficult to predict, relying almost exclusively on animal experiments. Animal experimentation of this kind is expensive and time consuming, raises ethical issues and does not necessarily represent best toxicological relevance to man. This project addresses the urgent need to develop in vitro based systems which are capable of predicting long term toxicity in humans.

The major objectives of this project are:

- 1) To develop advanced cell culture systems which as best possible represent the human liver and kidney in vivo. This will be achieved using combined strategies namely: co-cultures of resident cell types, targeted cell transformation, stem cell technology and new developments in organotypic cell culture (i.e. perfusion cultures and 3D cultures).
- 2) To identify specific early mechanistic markers of toxin induced cell alterations by using integrated genomic, proteomic and cytomic analysis.
- 3) To establish and prevalidate a screening platform (cell systems together with analysis tools) which is unambiguously predictive of toxin induced chronic renal and hepatic disease.

This proposal is unique in it's mechanistic integration of the three levels of cellular dynamics (genome, proteome and cytome) together with advanced cell culture technology to detect early events of cellular injury. Only with such an integrated approach will in vitro techniques ever be applicable to predicting chronic toxicity in man.

This project, if successful will (1) contribute to the replacement of animal testing in drug development, (2) increase the speed and decrease the cost of bringing new pharmaceutical compounds to the patient and (3) increase our understanding of toxin induced chronic disease development.

Recent News

The kick-off meeting was held on September 24 and 25 close to Valencia ([Minutes of the Predictomics Kick-Off meeting](#))

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The ecopaScienceInitiative is a project ecopa had initiated at its last Annual Workshop in November 2003 in Brussels ([Minutes of the Fourth ecopa Workshop](#)). The ecopa Management Board members have campaigned for it on different occasions and had had also talks with

representatives of the Cabinet of DG RTD of the EU Commission in that respect.

With substantial support of s e t , the German National Platform, Procter and Gamble, as well as Bayer CropScience, the Department of Toxicology at the VUB, the Dep.de Bioquímica Hospital Universitario La Fe of Valencia, this essential activity could be performed ,and a workshop could be organized near Alicante, Spain (<http://www.uv.es/~jcastell/indexESI.htm>)

Abstract of the project

The eSI Conference under the heading: Reaching the young scientist is an initiative organised by ecopa aimed at bringing together senior as well as young researchers to discuss about the new technologies and their applicability in in vitro research as well as to improve creativity and innovation in the search for alternative methods. ecopa had performed a detailed literature analysis of the last 5 years of research in alternative methods and had concluded that this area of applied research is drying out.

The conference is centered around reviewing the state of the art, future perspectives and applications of diverse technologies in the field of in vitro research, e.g. in the “-omics” area. ([ECVAM/ecopa Stakeholder Workshop](#))

ecopa has invited some renowned European scientists, i.e. "doyens" in their field of research such as proteomics, genomics, pharmaco- and toxicogenomics, but also of other areas that might have relevance to the development of alternative methods. It is not asked for immediate proposals for alternatives application from these key note speakers in their state of the art-presentation, but this should be back in their mind, of course. In addition, ecopa has asked experts of technology applications to give their input as well. Also, ecopa invite some young research scientists and postdocs who might have some application for their current reseach projects, and might find interest in the fireside discussions.

The number of invited participants is limited to ca. 40 individuals, 8 well-known senior scientists and “application” experts in the field, and 32 post docs/young scientists who also contribute by presenting their own studies. Additional participants interested in this novel approach are attending this conference also.

The conference is held in Pueblo Acantilado, an isolated and quiet resort 15 Km North of Alicante, in an ideal atmosphere for discussions and productive exchange of ideas.

Recent News

The workshop will take place with 52 participants, the outcome will be further pursued at the forthcoming SCIENCE FAIR within the Annual ecopa Workshop end of November.

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Sens-it-iv

This 6th Framework Programme-project is in statu nascendi and will be covered with some more detail in one of our next info ecopa-newsletters.