Reproductive hazards, prevention and equality

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The heritage

- A protectionist and excluding legislation
  - Who/what is protected?
  - How?
- In the 70s: the liberal interpretation of equal opportunities: gender neutral standards. The right to be exposed to the same hazards?
- Still specific provisions for pregnant women
Maternity Protection

- Primary prevention is not the priority
- Individual approach
- The central role of information given by the worker
- When does the protection start?
Reproductive hazards (1)

- Diversity of hazards
  - Physical Agents
  - Chemical Agents
  - Biological Agents
  - Ergonomic Factors and Work Organisation
Reproductive hazards (2)

- Diversity of effects
  - On reproduction s.s.
    - Libido reduction
    - Fertility reduction (M/F)
    - Menstrual Cycle Troubles
    - Hormonal Troubles
  - On foetal and human developments
    - Miscarriages
    - Structural malformations
    - Functional deficits
    - Transgenerational impact
How many workers are exposed?

- Poor and partial data
- France, Sumer 2003: 186,000 workers exposed to a short list of four mutagens; 180,000 to reprotoxins
- Netherlands, FNV survey, 662 workers in 4 branches/occupations (chemical industry, metal, wood and furniture, building painters): 253 situations of exposure with more than 200 substances. Preventive measures are scarce (5% for wood and furniture; 40% for the chemical industry)
- Netherlands: half a million of workers exposed to organic solvents
## Trade Union Survey in Madrid, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Nº firms</th>
<th>Toxic for embryo development</th>
<th>Toxic for reproduction</th>
<th>Potential endocrine disruptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Ind</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufact of non metal mineral prod</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal working</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and drink</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prevention today? An incoherent and ineffective jumble

- Invisibility for most of the hazards (amplified by the industry manipulation of science)
- Marketing and use of chemical substances without previous specific evaluation → no correct classification → no real information
- Lack or weakness of specific regulation
- Lack of monitoring in public health. Poor data in occupational health
The potential contribution of REACH

- New requirements for the evaluation of existing and new substances by the industry
- The volume criteria
- Authorisation process
- Will it work?
  - Public and social controls on REACH?
For a new approach

- Including reprotoxins in the Carcinogens directive
- Evaluation
  - How to make it possible?
  - Obstacles: for instance, masculine infertility is a taboo
  - Importance of branch approach
- Substitution as a central priority
- Technologic choice as a societal debate
- Control on prevention
- The International Dimension: against multinationals’ double standards
More information

- http://hesa.etui-rehs.org/
Some sources on Internet