

Opening remarks Jan Deconinck

Paris workshop

I am delighted to be able to welcome you here today of behalf of PROSAFE, the Product Safety Enforcement Forum of Europe. My name is Jan Deconinck and I work for the Belgian authorities but I appear in front of you now in my capacity as Chairman of PROSAFE.

We are deeply indebted to the DGCCRF for their hospitality and all the effort they have put into hosting this event. This is a most impressive venue for our meeting indeed.

Market surveillance in Europe has perhaps never been higher on the political agenda than it is today. We are doubly grateful therefore to the French government for hosting this event during their presidency of the European Council.

Today's workshop is also being held in the framework of the PROSAFE project Enhancing Market Surveillance through Best Practice or EMARS for short. The project has been generously supported by DG-SANCO of the European Commission, EFTA and several member states. We are very grateful for their support.

I would like now to briefly present the progress with the EMARS project before going on to explain our objectives for today's workshop.

The project continues to make excellent progress. We're in the home straight as it were. There are just six months remaining of what is a three yearlong project. Most of the substantive work has been or is nearing completion. To very briefly recap the principal deliverables of the project are, in no particular order, a Knowledge Base, a Rapid Advice system, a book of best practice relating to market surveillance techniques and risk assessment and a training strategy. By far the vast majority of these deliverables will be completed before the autumn. The main focus in the remaining six months of the project then will be on polishing off the deliverables and finalising the proposals for the future maintenance, operation and further development of many of the deliverables after the project is concluded.

The impact of the project continues to be felt in many ways. The visibility of the project is very high at a time when as I have previously noted the political importance attached to market surveillance has itself never been higher. This of course increases expectations but also helps create the conditions that allow us to have the means and resources at our disposal to realise our aims and objectives. The improved climate of cooperation in Europe is evidenced by the voluntary participation in the project. Some thirteen countries have joined voluntarily after the project was launched and have made substantial contributions. We have also had considerable success in helping to coordinate exchanges of market surveillance officials between member states. Perhaps most significantly however we can also point to a much-improved climate for co-operation on joint actions. PROSAFE already has a joint action running on

cigarette lighters with fifteen countries directly involved and we now have twenty-six countries that have agreed to participate in the joint actions that we are proposing under the 2008 call for tender from the European Commission. We are starting to be able to really see coordinated pan-European market surveillance in operation.

Another important deliverable of the EMARS project I have not mentioned so far is of course a strategy for the further enhancement of market surveillance in Europe after the completion of the current project. Today's workshop is being held to assist us in this important task. The main purpose of the workshop is to help improve our knowledge of the context within which the strategy must be implemented and to provide us with input from all stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental, with respect to their priorities for this important strategy.

We have tried to structure today's agenda so that we begin by learning about the key developments in the European Union that will shape the environment within which market surveillance will be carried out in the future and hence the context within which the strategy will be implemented. We are delighted therefore to have representatives amongst us from three Directorate-Generals, Health and Consumer Protection, Enterprise, Taxation and Customs who will take the floor shortly.

Then we will have some insight into perspectives from the national level, our hosts France, and the International level, the OECD and the International Consumer Product Safety Caucus, ICPS. This will again provide us with some food for thought as well as placing the proposed strategy in an international context.

We have then invited key stakeholders to present their priorities for market surveillance for the future. We hope to hear from the stakeholders what critical issues the strategy we are developing should address from their viewpoint. What do they think market surveillance authorities should do in the coming years to improve market surveillance in Europe?

Lastly we will present the initial results of the deliberations we have had in PROSAFE within the framework of the EMARS project about the direction that a future strategy should take. We will hear what issues we believe need to be addressed. We will look in some greater detail at two of these, joint actions and training. We will also present our proposal for EMARS II that would be a framework to support the implementation of the future strategy.

We will close the meeting with a panel session reflecting on what we have heard today and looking at the way ahead. After the meeting we will reflect on the days' proceedings and draft the strategy over the summer. We will then enter into a period of consultation before finalizing the document and presenting the final strategy at the Final EMARS Conference on the 20th of November in Brussels.