

## **Representative population survey: What do consumers know about the safety of and risks associated with chemicals and consumer products?**

BfR Project Description, 1 May 2008

The goal of this project was to gain insight into consumers' knowledge about the chemicals legislation, REACH, within the framework of a representative population survey. At the same time, gaps in knowledge were to be identified which would then be the focus of future BfR risk communication measures. By means of the envisaged duty to provide information, REACH is to further strengthen consumer rights, too. This can only happen if consumers are actually informed about their rights. With this project BfR makes a key contribution to informing consumers (amongst other things with the help of multipliers) and, by extension, to the successful implementation of REACH in Germany.

### **Project management agency**

BfR

**Department:** Risk Communication

**Unit:** Risk research, perception, early detection, impact assessment

### **Co-operation partners**

Hopp & Partner – Kommunikationsforschung ([www.hopp-und-partner.de](http://www.hopp-und-partner.de))

Süddeutsches Institut für empirische Sozialforschung (sine) e.V. ([www.sine-institut.de](http://www.sine-institut.de))

### **Project term**

05/2008-02/2009

### **Funding agency**

BfR

The goal of the project was to establish, using a standardised representative survey, what consumers know about the safety and regulation of chemicals and consumer products, and to establish whether consumers were of the opinion that chemicals and consumer products can be seen as sources of health risks. Furthermore, information was to be collected on consumer expectations of future forms of information and communication. The project focused on the following questions:

- What does the German population currently know about REACH and the safety of chemicals? Does the German population perceive chemicals more from the angle of risks or benefits? How does knowledge about chemicals and chemicals regulation influence their assessment?
- How do consumers evaluate the safety of consumer products? Have the incidents described affected their perception? What do consumers know about the regulation of these products?
- What expectations do consumers have regarding information on chemicals or products? Where and how do consumers find out about the properties of certain substances and products? How and by whom would consumers like to be informed about the regulation of chemicals and consumer products?
- Are consumers aware of the close association between chemicals regulation, REACH and product safety?

- Do the statements made in the survey provide any insight into the factors that influence consumer risk perception and in what direction public opinion about REACH and the safety of consumer products is likely to move?

The project was implemented in four stages. The first, a methodological quantitative pre-phase was introduced before the actual population survey. It involved the staging of focus groups with various groups from the population in order to determine in which areas chemistry and REACH are immediately perceivable and tangible for the population.

Based on the results of the focus groups the questionnaire was put together for the representative survey. The telephone survey (n = 100) was staged between October and November 2008. The final results will be published on conclusion of the project on the BfR website.

The final report is available and has been published in the *BfR-Wissenschaftsreihe 2/2008*. The publication can be accessed on the Internet on [http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/238/reach\\_kommunikation\\_zum\\_gesundheitlichen\\_verbraucherschutz.pdf](http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/238/reach_kommunikation_zum_gesundheitlichen_verbraucherschutz.pdf)

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