

SECOTOX - the International Society of Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety and its Regional Sections

Motto: To think globally, to act regionally

History and Objectives

The International Society of Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety was formally established in 1972 as non-profit scientific society, which statutory purpose is:

- to bring together its members and other interested persons from all aspects of science and the general public and to promote a scientific co-operation in order to evaluate the current problems of environmental quality and safety and to investigate solutions to these problems on a national, regional and world-wide basis. To this purpose SECOTOX considers, among other things, the question of air, earth and water quality standards, the safe use of food additives, drugs, pesticides, power stations etc., as well as the protection of plants, animals and man from the harmful effects of chemicals and physical agents, both natural and man-made.
- to elaborate and to publish suggestions, including the necessary data, in order to enable the regulatory agencies of various countries to make proper decisions as to evaluation the safety of chemicals, toxic and physical agents in the total environment.
- to make recommendations to ensure environmental safety and quality on a world-wide basis.
- to make recommendations concerning ecotoxicological education and training.

Among several distinguished scientists from all over the world who gave rise to the creation of SECOTOX, was Dr. Rene Truhaut, member of the French Academy of Sciences, who was the first one to use around 1969 the term Ecotoxicology in order to describe the study of adverse effects of chemicals with the aim of protecting natural

species and populations, and Dr. Friedhelm Korte, the founder of the Institute of Ecological Chemistry of GSF in Munich/Neuherberg, Germany. This Institute became the birthplace of a widely recognized German school of environmental chemistry, and was accepted as the geographical site of SECOTOX.

The formal foundation of SECOTOX was preceded by a long series of meetings and symposia held at the Institute of Ecological Chemistry of GSF in Neuherberg, and attended, besides scientists, by representatives of industry, government agencies and international organizations such as WHO, OECD and EEC. These meetings resulted in the establishment in 1971 of an International Academy of Environmental Safety (IAES), and of SECOTOX, that was founded a year later as a subsidiary body associated to IAES. From the very beginning SECOTOX operates internationally and consists of members from Europe, the Far East and the North and South America. The venue and datary of SECOTOX symposia and meetings comprise Japan (1973), Bonn (1974), Vienna (1975), Nice (1979), Copenhagen (1982), Rome (1985). SECOTOX formally sponsored individual meetings on ecotoxicology in Dublin (1989), Munich (1990), and co-sponsored meetings in Paris (1989) and La Rochelle, France (1991). The SECOTOX organ of publication is the periodical *Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety*, which started in 1972/1973.

The foundation in 1979 of SETAC, a similar North American Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, and next in 1989-1990 of its subsidiary associations for England (SETAC-UK) and Europe (SETAC-Europe) resulted in continuous efforts of both societies to find the way of constructive co-operation and in a closer attachment of SECOTOX to European ecotoxicological problems. On this background SECOTOX has carried out and finalized its reorganisation into an academic society in its own right and open to all relevant and active researchers. The revised statutes are duly registered and are finally being stamped before the Munich Court in Germany. Technically,

the reorganization of SECOTOX has resulted in its legal separation from the IEAS in order to make SECOTOX more operational.

SECOTOX has initiated a series of successful specialized European Conferences of Ecotoxicology held subsequently in Copenhagen (1988), Amsterdam (1992) and Zurich (1994). The 4th European Conference on Ecotoxicology has taken place in Metz, France in 1996. In between smaller meetings like workshops and symposia dealing with regional problems of public health and environmental damage caused by pollution in these specific regions took place, being widely attended by scientists and other interested parties representing industry and government agencies, both from the region and from other European countries and international organizations. The main aim of these meetings was to stimulate interdisciplinary discussions on regional issues concerning ecotoxicology and environmental health, according to the principle: to think globally, to act regionally.

It was under the presidency of Prof. Dr. F. Bro-Rasmussen in 1988-1991, when great political changes in Eastern European countries opened new possibilities for contacts and collaboration with colleagues from these countries. The Meeting on Highly Contaminated Areas in Eastern Europe in Gosen, Germany (1991) showed, that such contacts were very stimulating for further development of ecotoxicology and therefore one of the main objectives of SECOTOX for the near future became to promote the East-West communication.

Since the 2nd European SECOTOX Conference that was held in Amsterdam in 1992, one of the main activities of the society has been the organization of regional scientific meetings in various parts of Eastern Europe. The first meeting took place in 1992 in Nitra, the Republic of Slovakia. The workshop entitled Environmental and Health Effects of Industrial Pollution was attended by more than hundred scientists from both Eastern and Western European coun-

tries. During the meeting, the first regional section was established under the name Central and Eastern European Regional Section of SECOTOX (CEERS-SECOTOX). Prof. Dr. Jan H. Koeman, President of SECOTOX 1992-1994, deserves the special credit for initiating establishment of this Section. The countries involved in first instance are the Republic of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Ukraine.

CEERS-SECOTOX was formalized in 1993 during the next regional meeting entitled Environmental Toxicology: Pathways of Anthropogenic Pollutants in the Environment and Their Toxic Effects, which took place at Porabka-Kozubnik, Poland, in August 1993. Again almost all Central and Eastern European countries were represented there, including Russia and Latvia next to the countries mentioned before. Finally, in 1994 the 3rd meeting of the Central and Eastern European Regional Section was held at Balatonaliga in Hungary. The title of the meeting was; Toxicity, Hazard, Risk. There was an appreciable number of Latvian scientists, who joined SECOTOX and also offered to host one of the future meetings of the CEERS-SECOTOX. Noteworthy was also the presence of a group of about 15 young Polish environmental physicians being trained under WHO Programme. A formal intention of organization of the CEERS-SECOTOX meeting in 1996 has acceded the representative of the Czech Republic.

Simultaneously with the foundation of the Central and Eastern European Regional Section, and the regional CEERS-SECOTOX meeting, in 1993 another regional workshop was organized in Rome entitled Environmental Toxicology: Hazards to the Environment and Man in the Mediterranean Region. There was a remarkable attendance of scientists from almost all countries of the region, including Spain, Portugal, France, Croatia, Greece, Israel, Morocco, Cyprus, Malta, Libya and of course Italy, next to people from all other European countries, North America, South Africa, Thailand, India, Bangladesh and the Yemen Republic. The regional approach appears to be very

successful and will be certainly continued. In this connection, again a special tribute should be paid to Prof. Dr. Jan H. Koeman who played a key role in the development of the regional activity. Prof. Dr. Paul Vasseur, the President of SECOTOX since 1994, consequently continues this approach. A Regional Section on the Mediterranean Region was formally established during 8th International Symposium on Environmental Pollution and its Impact on Life in the Mediterranean Region, held in Rhodos, Greece, in 1995.

Currently, the regional approach finds new votaries among the representatives of African countries. Therefore the first International Symposium on Environmental Pollution and Impact Assessment has been held in Mohammadia, Marocco from October 9th to 11th in 1996. This conference intended to cover the technological advances in environmental analysis and to review the state-of-the-art of knowledge on the impact of pollution on ecosystems. The North-South link will also be a matter of concern in the forthcoming period. All the regional meetings that were organized over the last two years had an important scientific input by a number of international organizations, including the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, the International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals of UNEP (IRPTC), the European Environmental Research Organisation (EERO) and the European Centre for Ecotoxicology and Toxicology of Chemicals (ECETOC).

The activities of SECOTOX are directed not only to a more efficient exchange of scientific data but also to the development of unifying concepts with regard to important target areas, such as the improvement of methods to assess and predict environmental and health effects of chemical pollution and for instance strategies to deal with the toxicity and environmental impact of complex chemical mixtures.

The idea of European and global integration of environmental protection efforts of scientists and policy makers on

the regional basis, at the same time strongly co-ordinated internationally, as the most rational and scientifically sound approach to the elaboration of an optimum regional ecotoxicological policy, has been consequently presented and developed at the consecutive SECOTOX events mentioned above.

Finally, after over two decades of ecotoxicology, we are now at a cross-roads where we must deal with new issues that will allow us to be more predictive towards the long-term effects of micro-pollutants: in other words, we really must make an effort to introduce more ecology into ecotoxicology! Ecological assessment is now imperative and we must develop the tools to achieve this. A new era seeking to better appreciate ecosystem health is upon us, where environmental and human health cannot be dissociated.

We, thus, invite you to become a member of SECOTOX by using the forms attached.

As a matter of fact, the 4th European Conference of SECOTOX which was scheduled to be held in Metz in August 1996 has addressed this major theme.

The conference in the Central Eastern European Section of SECOTOX on Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety took place in Jurmala, Latvia from 24th - 27th of August 1997. Main topics were focused on the air- and water pollution, waste treatment and remediation as well as ecotoxicology of fish and environment and health.

In 1998 a Conference in Antalya, Turkey, was a focus on mediterranean aspects within SECOTOX society in collaboration with TÜBITAK and universities.

The first conference of the asian SECOTOX branch was held on a Yangtse boat between Wuhan and Chongqing, China in 1998.

In 1999 conferences in Hungary (Balatánföldvár) and Germany (Munich) took place. At the last conference in con-

junction with the hungarian society of toxicologists in Munich as a biannual central european SECOTOX conference and assembly of the members and the council a new president and board was elected. Prof. Dr. I. Twardowska was elected as successor of Prof. Dr. A. Kettrup.

The next meetings in the new millenium are scheduled in Poland, Ukraine, Slovakia and India.

The membership of the Council of SECOTOX 1999/2000 is:

President:	I. Twardowska
Past-President:	A. Kettrup
Secretary:	K.-W. Schramm
Treasurer:	H. Parlar
Members:	E. Belkhadir Ph. Bourdeau F. Bro-Rasmussen P. Calow H. De Kruif M. Goto P. Hansen J. M. Jouany R. Koch J. H. Koeman J. Kovacicova A. Pinter F. Salamiou J. Schmieder P. Vasseur L. Vittozzi
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