

EPAA Designathon Workshop

20-22 March 2024, Ispra, Italy



The European Partnership
for Alternative Approaches to Animal Testing



On 20 - 22 March 2024, 44 scientists met at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) in Ispra, Italy for the first workshop to discuss the solutions submitted for the EPAA Designathon. The Designathon was launched in May 2023 and asked for solutions to be submitted that could allow an alternative, non-animal approach to hazard classification, based solely on the use of New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) for systemic toxicity. The aim of the Designathon is to design a potential future classification scheme to ensure equivalent protection, by capturing substances that are currently classified, but that could also increase the overall protection level, by assessing substances not currently classified due to a lack of information.

The workshop was opened by the Deputy Director-General of JRC, Salla Saastamoinen followed by members of the EPAA and JRC colleagues who set the scene for the workshop reminding all participants about the aims of the challenge. 23 solutions were submitted for the Designathon by the deadline of 31 December 2023. For each solution, a poster was displayed during the workshop explaining the ideas explored and any results obtained when trying to classify substances on the list of 150 reference chemicals provided by the EPAA project team. The aim of the workshop was not to define a 'winning solution', but to discuss the approaches which had been taken in this pilot phase, results that had been obtained with the reference chemicals, identify areas of commonality, gaps to be filled in the future and to craft a way forward that could progress these ideas.

During seven breakout sessions over the three days, representatives from the solution submitters and the EPAA project team discussed aspects of the Bioactivity/Bioavailability matrix that forms the basis of the Designathon challenge. Initially teams discussed NAM-based toxicokinetics (TK) and ADME properties (including identification of the most commonly used properties and NAMs in the submitted solutions). This was followed by a similar discussion on approaches for NAM-based toxicodynamics (TD) and then the variety ideas that had been used to combine TK and TD information for hazard classification decisions. Finally, there was an exchange of ideas around the results that had been obtained by the teams on selected chemicals from the overall list of 150.

The workshop concluded with a discussion on potential themes for upcoming streams of activities aimed at developing further different aspects and integration of the potential solutions for the Designathon challenge in a continuous activity of co-creation based on this first pilot phase. There was enthusiasm from participants for continued collaboration to build on all the work carried out since the Designathon was launched in May 2023 as well as defining opportunities to encourage input from scientists who have not yet contributed. An EPAA webinar is planned for 8 May, 2024 when more details of the discussions from the workshop will be presented.



Links:

Designathon Welcome session: <https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/epaa-designathon-workshop-24-03-20>

Designathon posters with solutions are available here: https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/calls-expression-interest/epaa-launches-designathon-human-systemic-toxicity_en

About EPAA

EPAA is a Public-Private Partnership across seven industry sectors and between European Commission and Industry stakeholders. Launched in 2005, it gathers 39 companies, 9 European trade federations and 5 Directorates-General of the European Commission.

Further information is available on: https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/chemicals/european-partnership-alternative-approaches-animal-testing_en

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