

TRAINING OF HEALTH RISK ASSESSORS IN EUROPE – DEMAND, NEEDS AND SUPPLY

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Background and aims: Health risk assessment is an essential tool in protecting public health and a key aspect of EU policy and legislation. There is a lack of coordinated training opportunities for health risk assessors in Europe. The aim of the Risk Assessment and Management – European Training Programme (Risk ASSETs) project is to bring together technical specialist, including Epidemiologists, Toxicologists and Environmental Assessors to develop a suitable training programme to address this need.

Methods: A literature review and survey of health risk assessors was undertaken. From this, competencies for health risk assessors were developed and agreed at two international workshops. These were used to develop the curriculum and course module outlines. Epidemiology is a core component of the project and is integrated in all relevant teaching material. Additionally, a review of administrative frameworks for different professional development schemes is being undertaken in order to develop an administrative framework to deliver training across the EU.

Results: The training needs of health risk assessors in Europe are broad and encompass the needs of health risk assessors in regulatory bodies, public health, industry, consultancies and research. The proposed competencies aim to address this broad range of training needs. Consideration has been given to developing essential knowledge and key skill in Epidemiology within the context of health risk assessment. The proposed training scheme allows a non-specialist scientist to undertake a modular programme to qualify as a health risk assessor, with the option of tailoring their training to suit their specific role as a health risk assessor. The proposed administrative system coordinates training across Europe, allowing a trainee to undertake training in different European countries.

Conclusions: There is a substantial need for more coordinated health risk assessment training opportunities in Europe. The Risk ASSETs project provides a proposed health risk assessment training model for Europe. Such a training scheme has the potential to improve the quality of health risk assessments undertaken and, subsequently, improve public health protection.