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METALS AND ALLOYS IN CONTACT WITH FOOD: HOW TO ESTABLISH COMPLIANCE WITH EUROPEAN REGULATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, 6-7 November, Ljubljana, Slovenia

115 participants from 22 countries in Europe, Asia and South America representing national authorities, control laboratories, industry, consultancies, retailers and consumer associations, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission and the European Food Safety Authority attended an international symposium on the safety of metals and alloys used in food contact materials co-organised by the Council of Europe's European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and HealthCare (EDQM) and the Slovenian health authorities in Ljubljana. The aim of the symposium was to present and explain Council of Europe [Resolution CM/Res\(2013\)9](#) and recommendations applying to food packaging material and kitchen utensils and to exchange best practices in the area of product safety and compliance testing. Currently, there are wide disparities in national regulations in Europe and European harmonisation is on-going to address this.

A [Technical Guide](#) is now available, presenting this Resolution and practical guidelines for its implementation. The guidelines have been agreed between national authorities, manufacturers and control laboratories (private and public sector) and define quality requirements for materials such as aluminium foil, kitchen utensils, coffee machines etc., for which no specific EU regulations exist. The text recommends the implementation of Specific Release Limits (SRLs) for metal ions (e.g. aluminium, iron, chromium, nickel) or impurities (e.g. lead, cadmium) that are released from materials in contact with foodstuffs.

Metals and alloys are used for many different industrial and food contact applications. Stainless steel and aluminium are amongst the most common food contact materials used in the food industry, food services and by the consumer at home, e.g. in foils for packaging, containers for storage or transport, tableware, cooking or household utensils. Other metals and alloys, either alone or coated with organic, ceramic, enamel or metallic coatings are used in food contact materials.

The open discussions during the symposium demonstrated the interest of all stakeholders in constructive approaches to progress towards harmonisation of requirements for metals and alloys in contact with food, and ultimately an efficient and transparent European regulatory framework. Council of Europe Resolution CM/Res(2013)9 and respective recommendations provide an excellent basis towards this goal.

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Note for the Editor: Further information is available on the internet site www.edqm.eu

The EDQM is a leading organisation that protects public health by enabling development, supporting implementation and monitoring the application of quality standards for safe medicines and their safe use. Our standards are recognised as a scientific benchmark world-wide. The European Pharmacopoeia is legally binding in European member states. Similarly, the EDQM develops guidance and standards in the areas of blood transfusion, organ transplantation and consumer health protection.

The Council of Europe's activities related to cosmetics and food packaging materials have fallen within the remit of the EDQM since 2009. In this area, priority has been given to work on metals and alloys used in food packaging and also in the manufacture of items in contact with food.

Furthermore, the Committee of Experts on Packaging Materials for Food and Pharmaceutical products (P-SC-EMB) has begun a review of the existing resolutions and technical documents. Paper and board, cork, printing inks for packaging materials, coatings and elastomers such as silicones and rubber are among the materials for which the Council of Europe has already established substance inventories.

A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member States.

¹There are now thirty-eight members of the [European Pharmacopoeia](#) Commission: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the European Union. There are twenty-seven observers: Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Canada, China, Georgia, Israel, Madagascar, Malaysia, Moldova, Morocco, Republic of Belarus, Republic of Guinea, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Singapore, the Russian Federation, Senegal, South Africa, Syria, Tunisia, United States of America, the Taiwan Food and Drug Administration (TFDA) and the World Health Organization (WHO).