

# Institutions and official bodies: who does what?

The roles of the main official bodies and institutions mentioned in the following pages, together with some others that are important in toxicology, are briefly summarised below:

**NEA**: Nuclear Energy Agency. A semi-autonomous institution within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Its mission is to help member states to maintain and develop, through international co-operation, the scientific, technological and legal basis indispensable for the safe, environmentally friendly and economical use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Within the NEA, one of the technical committees (the CRPPH, Committee on Radiation Protection & Public Health) studies all issues linked to radiation safety and helps to draw up recommendations.

**IAEA**: International Atomic Energy Agency. A specialised inter-governmental organisation placed under the aegis of the United Nations Organisation. It has two main missions: (i) promote the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and (ii) make sure aid it provides is not used to serve military ends.

**ICRP**: International Commission on Radiological Protection. An international non-governmental institution with co-opted members. It makes recommendations for radiation safety standards, and proposes the most relevant models and dose limit values (see *How is the ICRP keeping pace with change?*). ICRP documents constitute de facto international references for regulations.

**EPA**: Environmental Protection Agency. This American agency plays an important role in the evaluation and classification of substances liable to be disseminated into the environment, e.g., crop treatment agents.

**Euratom**: European Atomic Energy Community. This body was set up in 1957 by the Euratom treaty. Its mission is to assist the development of nuclear activities for peaceful purposes, and their control in the member states. Among other things, Euratom institutes "basic standards" for the health protection of the population and workers against hazards arising from ionising radiation, whether or not it is of nuclear origin. To achieve this, the Commission proposes prescriptions that are submitted for approval to the European Parliament and for adoption by the Council of the European Union. The execution of these prescriptions, which can be directives, regulations or decisions, is one of the powers conferred on the Commission by the Euratom Treaty.

**ICRU**: International Commission on Radiation Units and Measurements. An organisation parallel to the ICRP that is specialised in measurement units and methods.

**IRPA**: International Radiation Protection Association. An international federation of radiological protection concerns. It is a professional association grouping radiation safety specialists, in the same way as the **SFRP** (*Société française de radioprotection*, which is an IRPA member) does this in France.

**IRSN**: *Institut de radioprotection et de sûreté nucléaire*, (Institute of radioprotection and nuclear safety) formed in 2002

by merging the *Institut de protection et de sûreté nucléaire* (Institute of protection and nuclear safety) and the *Office de protection contre les rayonnements ionisants* (Office for protection against ionising radiation) is a public state-run body responsible for assessment and research missions, including the protection of persons and the environment against ionising radiation.

**ISO**: International Standardisation Organisation. This body draws up international standards, here those concerning methods of radioactivity measurement.

**WHO**: World Health Organisation. This UN-run organisation is concerned, among other things, with problems of food and drink quality and exposure to radiation.

**IARC**: International Agency for Research on Cancer. This body answers to the WHO, and co-ordinates and conducts research on the causes of human cancers, and in particular holds a list of carcinogenic agents.

**OSHA**: Occupational Safety and Health Administration. This administrative entity reports to the US Department of Labor. In particular, it evaluates the toxicity of substances present in the workplace.

**UNSCEAR**: United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. This body collects the available data on sources and effects of ionising radiation, and draws up analytical documents and reports in the fields of radiobiology, radiopathology and radiation exposure. Its experts work on providing the authorities with the best scientific basis on which to draw up regulations.

Three other bodies are important in France. Their roles are specified in a decree published by the government on March 26 and 27 2003:

**AFFSA**: *Agence française de sécurité sanitaire des aliments* (French food health safety agency). This is an autonomous public body entrusted, among other things, with providing the technical and scientific support necessary for the application of measures relevant to public hygiene and food health safety.

**AFSSE**: *Agence française de sécurité sanitaire et environnementale* (French health and environmental safety agency). This is an autonomous public body supported operationally by fifteen public bodies, which helps to define national research policy in health and environmental safety.

The **Conseil supérieur d'hygiène publique de France** (French higher council for public hygiene), which includes a radiation safety section, is a consultative body responsible for issuing appraisals and recommendations and carrying out assessment missions for the Ministry of Health.