

Our Working Party, the WP.6 started work on market surveillance issues in 2002 with a first international forum, followed by three others in 2005, 2007 and 2008.

These early events, which were each attended by over 100 representatives from over 30 countries, as well as the European Commission, the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), the World Intellectual Property Organization, the World Trade Organization, the European Committee on Standardization (CEN), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and numerous business executives, were organized against a background of growing commitment both by the authorities and by business to an efficient market surveillance system that could ensure that products fulfil mandatory requirements without endangering users, consumers or the environment and maintain fair competition.

To follow up on the work programme established at the time, and keep abreast of more recent developments, a dedicated group was created within the UNECE: the Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (MARS).

The MARS Group has held yearly meetings in Slovakia since 2003. This is the second meeting hosted by the Czech Republic while last year the meeting took place in Belgrade, Serbia. We look forward to an increased rotation of meetings internationally among the Member States.

The work of the MARS Group has been very fruitful. In particular, its major outputs include, so far:

- The adoption in 2007, of Recommendation M on the “Use of Market Surveillance Infrastructure as a Complementary Means to Protect Consumers and Users Against Counterfeit Goods”;
- The adoption in 2011 of Recommendation N on “Good Market Surveillance Policies and Practices” which aims at guiding authorities in the set up and administration of a market surveillance system;
- The publication in 2011 of a “Glossary of Market Surveillance Terms” in English, French and Russian which will be useful in promoting an increased mutual understanding of national practices in the field of Market Surveillance
- The creation of a database of Market surveillance authorities which spans beyond the UNECE region to include also Brazil, and China, among others.

Although market surveillance is a task on its own, it is intertwined with and builds on elements decided over by other actors defining standards and regulations. The broad approach that the Working Party takes on regulatory cooperation integrates market surveillance, as well as metrology, standards and norms, and conformity assessment. This integrative approach is necessary, because all stakeholders need to be consulted in order to develop tools able to strengthen regulatory cooperation and facilitate the work of market surveillance authorities.

As the Chairperson of the WP.6, what I wish for the MARS Group are two things. First, to see it being closer to national and regional market surveillance authorities in Member States, especially the Russian speaking ones, and I am very pleased that the EEC is represented here today.

Second, I hope that the MARS Group can also work in closer partnership with the other initiatives that are ongoing within the WP. 6, and in particular, the Sectoral Initiatives, and the Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems or GRM for short.

For those who may be new to the WP. 6 activities, I will recall that the Working Party is developing four initiatives to increase regulatory convergence at the global level in three important sectors, namely: Telecommunications Equipment, Earth-moving Equipment, Equipment used in Environments with an Explosive Atmosphere and Pipeline Safety Equipment.

These initiatives aim at increasing the safety of workers working in high-risk facilities and at the same time remove barriers to international trade.

These Sectoral Initiatives – and particularly on Equipment used in Environments with an Explosive Atmosphere – have expressed a continued need for guidance directed at authorities on how to deal with increased rates on non-conformity on the markets for industrial goods and components.

This is one area where the UNECE action is most important, as other organizations – such as EMARS, OECD and the International Consumer Product Health and Safety Organization (ICPHSO) among others – are not undertaking work on industrial goods, but focus on consumer safety.

We have come to the conclusion in WP.6 that consumer safety and industrial safety are closely linked. For example, when a component that goes into a lithium battery is faulty, a consumer picking up a mobile phone that is charging could become the victim of an explosion which might endanger her life and her property.

Guidance for market surveillance authorities should be both cross-sectoral and specific to the industrial branches that are most affected. So, I hope to see increased coordination between the groups involved in these different areas of work and the MARS Group itself.

A second area where I hope to see increased exchange is between our MARS Group and our GRM Group. Again for those who may be less familiar with our activities within the Working Party the GRM has been established in 2011 to develop best practice and guidance on how regulatory authorities can effectively manage the risks that confront consumers, citizens and communities.

One of the areas of regulatory practice in which risk assessment and risk management tools are most used in undoubtedly market surveillance, and so I hope to see more participation by the MARS experts in the GRM webinars and ongoing activities. The next webinar will take place just a day after the MARS meeting will be over: on June 26.

With this, I'd like to conclude, wishing you the best for the coming two days of work.