tattoo inks – example of non EU-regulated consumer products

Elisabeth Paludan
Danish EPA
1. Why is it necessary to regulate tattoo inks?
2. Which EU-regulation exists?
3. Why is it not sufficient?
4. How could it be solved?
Tattoo’s are an integrated part of our culture

- 15 % of the Danish population has a tattoo
- 20 % in the age group 18-35
- 17 % is considering to have one
- 58 % of the already tattooed are considering to have more
- 12 % seems to have some kind of skin problems - 25% of those with colours
- The popularity is growing
Tattoo inks are imported consumer mixtures

- Mostly imported from: S, UK, US, (China)
- Mostly produced in: US, UK, D, It, Japan, (China)
Results from danish surveys - comparable to other countries

• Black pigments:
  – The cheep ones: PAH (118ppm), BaP (5,3ppm)
  – The expensive ones: no PAH

• Coloured:
  – All yellow, red, green contains carcinogens
    PAA: azodyes, O-anisidine (1775ppm), aniline (300 ppm)…
  – Around 50 % in amounts that may potentially pose a risk

• Sterility in inks: around 10-15 % are contaminated
Risk - challenges

- **Chemicals** - carcinogens, allergens
- **Bacterial** - sterility
- **Exposure** - by injection, on purpose, into the skin
- **No labelling** - no user knowledge of ingredients or impurities and degradation products
- **No safety evaluation** of chemical ingredients, impurities, degradation products

What a challenge!
Existing EU-regulation for chemicals and other risks

- Tattoo inks are chemical mixtures: REACH and Classification and Labelling
- Tattoo inks are consumer products: Product Safety Directive
REACH – chemicals

• **Information**: Registration dossiers
  – In practice no information about specific use – only about generic use f.inst. “pigments” (probably not produced inside EU with the purpose of use in tattoos)

• **Restriction**: No specific restriction for use of chemicals in tattoo inks – however possible, but only by regulating substance-by-substance or group restriction based on identified risk
Classification & Labelling - chemicals

- C&L is based on warnings - if the chemicals accidentally comes into human contact (hazard identification)
- Are not considering exposure into the skin
- Quite high concentrations needed for CMRs for classification and labelling (0,1%)
Product Safety Directive (GPSD) - all risks for consumers

- Covers only specific products where the authorities can document a risk for instance based on chemical or bacterial analysis and risk assessment
Challenges for existing EU-regulation – tattoo’s

1. A soup of many different chemicals, impurities and degradation products
2. Not only chemical risk- also bacterial risk
3. The exposure – not covered by criteria in REACH
4. Ingredient list needed: some people allergic to small amounts of specific chemicals and also we are not familiar with all ingredients and their potential risks
5. Safety evaluation needed – how to evaluate the risk
6. Serious impact if risk – can not be removed by rinsing water f. instance
Danish initiatives

• An information campaign for the consumers: ”Think before you ink”

• A national regulation has been notified to the Commission covering all the risks (chemicals, bacteria, labelling with ingredient list, safety evaluation)

• The Commission finds that REACH and the Classification and labelling regulation should be sufficient to deal with the chemicals – therefore the national regulation must wait/be stopped
Conclusion - tattoo inks

- Need for a specific EU-product regulation because:
  - tattoo inks are a specific product area with specific challenges which can not be sufficiently covered by existing EU-regulation
  - National regulation is not sufficient to get safe tattoo inks for the consumers
Thanks for Your Attention!