



## Correspondence

**Toxicology as an academic discipline in European Universities**

**Statement**

The Federation of European Toxicologists and European Societies of Toxicology (EUROTOX) publishes this statement paper on the status of Toxicology as an academic discipline in Europe to draw attention to the critical importance of the discipline in protecting the health of consumers, workers and the environment. The discipline is essential in ensuring safety of food, drugs, pesticides and industrial products used in daily life. Due to reductions in the staffing of the discipline in many universities, EUROTOX needs urgently to remind governments and the public of the necessity to maintain and strengthen toxicology as an academic discipline in light of its essential role across an ever-growing range of activities.

EUROTOX is the federation of national societies of toxicology in Europe with a combined membership of approximately 7000 with an additional 200 individual members. EUROTOX aims to foster toxicology, both scientifically and educationally, in all countries of Europe. We are concerned about the situation in academia which may impede the future development of the discipline. Across Europe, departments of Toxicology in universities have been reduced in size or even closed, posts have been not renewed, and currently heads of departments are being told of the intention to close their departments in the near future. Strengthening toxicology in academic institutions is a basic requirement for scientific innovation and for the education and development of young scientists.

Toxicological expertise is instrumental in assessing and reducing human health risks in the work place and for consumers. In the public debate, toxicological expertise is also needed to evaluate evidence and to argue whether or not there is a scientifically founded reason for public health concerns. Governments across Europe need toxicology expertise to serve on committees to safeguard our future. This is a service to society and is an ongoing need which requires appropriately qualified individuals to maintain a safe environment for all. In the absence of appropriately experienced toxicologists, governments will be forced to seek toxicological input from non-experts who may inadvertently offer the wrong advice. This means we need to train toxicologists which means we need academic toxicology.

Toxicology is a translational science that uses basic and clinical science to solve problems in toxicologically relevant fields. A high level of basic scientific research in toxicology is the prerequisite to assessing emerging risks in the process of developing drugs, chemicals and materials. Toxicologists are the people who find the answers and offer solutions. In the framework of sustainable development, innovation of chemicals and products cannot be realised without appropriate and innovative research.

EUROTOX believes that research and teaching in toxicology must be maintained and strengthened across Europe and is convinced of the need to protect existing and found new institutions devoted to basic research in toxicology.

**Conflict of interest**

None.

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