



# VITAL nano DEBATE

## - Concluding remarks





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## Summary

On February 1<sup>th</sup> 2013 50 Danish representatives from companies, industry associations, trade unions, legislative authorities and research institutions gathered at the Danish Technological Institute to debate:

### **"How do we secure a safe working environment in organizations working with nanomaterials"?**

At the meeting scientists presented the results of the research project, VITAL nano, and set the scene for a debate with 9 recommendations for future action.

Presentations, results and recommendations from the VITAL nano project are available in full (in Danish only) at <http://www.teknologisk.dk/projekter/projekt-vitalnano/31008?cms.query=vital>

The meeting was held in an engaged and constructive atmosphere with plenty of dialogue between an invited panel, the audience and project researchers. The main conclusions of the meeting are presented below:

#### **Conclusions of the debate:**

- 1. There is a need for support to build competence in the Danish companies to safely handle nanomaterials at the workplace. VITAL nano has provided a number of conclusions on action to support this!*
- 2. The toxicological research is now so robust that it gives reason to take proactive regulatory action to minimize workers exposure for nanomaterials in the working environment.*
- 3. To make sure that all companies work safely with nanomaterials – including SMEs with less capacity and resources – there is a need for clear communication on nanomaterial risks from authorities and industrial associations along with guidance on current regulatory initiatives."*

## Recommendations and initiated action

The recommendations from VTIAL nano research project were presented at the meeting and fell into three overall areas: Legislative and industrial regulation (red), Companies and OHS-organisations (blue) and Research and education (red)

1. The Danish Working Environment Authority should communicate clearly on nanomaterials and its risks in the working environment.
2. Industry and unions should initiate a dialogue on provisional and guiding reference exposure values in the working environment
3. The Danish Working Environment Authority and Sectoral Health and Safety Councils should present guidance on the regulatory effects of the EU-nano definition.
4. The Sectoral Health and Safety Councils should updated their guidance on workplace assessments specifically addressing nanomaterial risk scenarios.

5. Local OHS organizations should allocate resources to develop knowledge on nanomaterial risks and safe handling.
6. Local OHS organizations should focus on exposure in their risks assesment until hazards are better understood.
7. Local OHS organizations should prioritize Health and Safety strategies that eliminate/minimize exposure.

8. Educational councils should work to develop vocational education and training courses that provide the newest knowlegde and tools to assist safe handling of nanomaterials.
9. Research councils and public funding authoritues should work to support a national capacity on safe handling of nanomaterials in their research grants.

In general, the recommendations presented received a lot of positive feedback from the participants at the meeting and during the debate.

During and after the debate a number of new initiatives by various relevant organizations have been identified that support especially recommendation number 1-4 and 6-8, including:

- On-going work in the Danish Working Environment Authority to make public information on risk assessment and managing nanomaterials on their official web-site.
- Expressions of interests from industry and trade unions or specific plans to develop up-to-date guidance and reference materials in the area of industry and construction through the Sectorial Health and Safety Councils.
- Dialogue and planning of a continued education and training course on safe handling of nanomaterials aimed at OHS-coordinators, teachers and OHS-inspectors concerning definitions, regulation and risk management at the workplace.
- The Danish NanoSafety Center is working to develop a risk assessment tool, NanoSafer 2.0, to support local health and safety organizations with risk assessment and safe handling of nanomaterials.

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