

## **WFCC Committee on Postal, Quarantine and Safety Regulations Report 2000-2004**

**by Dr Christine Rohde**

The detailed report by the PQSR Committee representing its activities, developments and concerns is available online at <http://www.wfcc.info/index.html>

The report is also freely available as printed brochure. Please, direct your order to Dr. Christine Rohde, DSMZ ([chr@dsmz.de](mailto:chr@dsmz.de)).

Through the last period of office, this committee had eleven members. Several main issues of the work plan turned out to be milestones for this committee and for the scientific community. A summary is given below:

### **Summary on the work of the WFCC PQSR Committee**

The WFCC Postal, Quarantine and Safety Regulations (PQSR) Committee looks back to almost 30 years of existence: WFCC Newsletter No. 1, March 1975, announced the establishment of a Committee on Postal and Quarantine Regulations having the aim to collect and disseminate information on the relevant regulations. This demonstrates that even in the *pre* gene technology era, at times when bioterrorism was not a catchword, when dangerous goods shipping questions were not dominating daily life in the shipping departments of the Culture Collections and when biosafety and biosecurity did not receive as much attention as nowadays there was a demand to have a group among WFCC looking closer at the regulations. Scientists had to become familiar with all the regulations governing handling and distributing of biological materials. Over the years, the name of this Committee slightly changed, the list of the Committee members grew and so did the list of aims and goals. As for other WFCC Committees, it is of high relevance to have enough members who are working at Culture Collections/Biological Resource Centres in different regions all over the world. Actually, the PQSR Committee has twelve members in eleven countries. During the last term of office the achievement of some milestones needed a lot of attention. The most outstanding one was receiving observer status to the United Nations Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (UNSCETDG) and the succeeding negotiations on shipping deregulations for Risk Group 2 cultures. The expectations regarding the latter had been very high.

The bioterroristic anthrax attacks with all the consequences like e.g. irradiation of freight consignments and letters and discussions have constantly occupied this Committee since September 2001. Bio-legislation covers a complex area of laws, regulations and guidelines on the international and national levels so that the PQSR Committee is necessarily characterised by vital correspondence and exchange of news. Its self-image and main mission is to function as a mirror reflecting the demands and problems of the Culture Collections on the one hand and of the world-wide scientific community on the other hand. In order to get

more publicity and to demonstrate which issues are addressed by the PQSR Committee, a special flyer was published in August 2002 and widely distributed. The work of the Committee has by no means come to a final point but needless to mention, there are open questions requiring a closer look. This WFCC Committee has been exciting since its foundation and has many challenges ahead of it.

### **Overview on Main Activities and Milestones**

The PQSR Committee was able to fill many issues of its Work Plan successfully with life, some deserve more or constant attention in the future and some certainly beyond measure like e.g. world-wide biosecurity aspects (despatch of dangerous microorganisms/"select agents"/"dual-use" material). A milestone to be highlighted was receiving the WFCC observer status to UNSCETDG and the succeeding positive negotiations on deregulating transport requirements for cultures of Risk Group 2. In order to receive more attention, the PQSR Committee produced a multi-colour flyer describing the main activities, aims and goals and containing the member addresses as well as the WFCC homepage access. Large numbers of this flyer were distributed by the PQSR members on different occasions, at the UN, BTWC Expert Meeting on Disarmament, Geneva, August 2003 and at the UNSCETDG Meeting in Geneva, July 2004.