

REPUBLIC



OF CYPRUS

## MINISTRY OF HEALTH

### Abridged Version of the Annual Report of the State General Laboratory

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### STATE GENERAL LABORATORY (SGL)

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# **I N T R O D U C T I O N**

## **The SGL in Cyprus**

- **develops** and integrates actual scientific information, which is then made accessible to policy makers and the Law Enforcement community and facilitates the implementation and supervision of laws and regulations in the field of public health, environment and administration of justice
- **provides** maximum socio-economic impact through preventing and solving problems related to the safety and quality of food, environment and pharmaceutical preparations, safety and sustainability of water resources, the fight against crime and trafficking of illegal drugs
- **strives** towards harmonisation with international scientific developments as well as EU legislation, policies and approaches.

**Services are provided to all Ministries, Municipalities and Organisations in Cyprus and co-operation is continuously strengthened with Institutes and Universities on a National and International level in its field of responsibilities.**

**Dr Costas Michael**

**Director of the State General Laboratory**

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# STATE GENERAL LABORATORY

## 1. Responsibilities

The State General Laboratory (SGL), a Department of the Ministry of Health is the official Laboratory used by the Government to fulfil requirements embodied in the laws covering the following areas: analysis of foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, water, environmental samples, police exhibits, narcotics, biological samples for poisoning cases and unsuspected deaths, goods purchased by the Government Stores, agricultural products for export and industrial products, through customs, for tariff classification.

## 2. Priorities and Objectives of the SGL

The following could be highlighted:

- (a) Developing and integrating scientific knowledge which is then made accessible for strategic planning and policy setting in the areas of food and water safety, health and environmental protection, administration of justice and socioeconomic development.
- (b) Preventing and solving problems related to the safety and quality of food, environment and drugs.
- (c) Securing the long term safety, sustainability and multifunctionality of the island's water resources.
- (d) Facilitating the Police in crime investigation and combating drug trafficking/use as well as courts in the judicial process.
- (e) Supporting commerce and industry and fair trade and strengthening the competitiveness of Cyprus products.
- (f) Abiding to the stringent requirements of ISO 17025 so as to encompass, in a fruitful manner, its increasing responsibilities emanating from Cyprus' accession to the EU.
- (g) Expanding its Accreditation fields based on the ISO 17025 standard.
- (h) Implementing mechanisms, which target towards the representativeness, effectiveness of quality control while enhancing efficiency.
- (i) Fulfilling its role within the European Union, by contributing to the various networks organized by European Bodies/Authorities, to the implementation of EU-level functions and research programmes.

## 3. Means of reaching objectives

### 3.1 Implementing and Maintaining a Quality Policy

The SGL has put in place a quality policy to comply with international standards and to guarantee the quality of all its work. Its quality policy forms an integral part of its response towards the responsibilities it has been given,

in terms of reliability, safety and confidence. All areas, therefore, of scientific, technical and managerial work are subject to the quality provisions. To date, 11 laboratories (all 10 Food Laboratories - 01, 02, 05, 06, 08, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 and the Laboratory for the Quality Control of Pharmaceuticals – (04) in the organogramme) have received ESYD (the Greek Accreditation Body) --- Accreditation and two more (the Forensic Chemistry and Toxicology Laboratory (03) and the Ecotoxicology Laboratory (07)) have passed the final audit and are awaiting accreditation.

The SGL has continued improvement of the quality management system by implementing internal audits and reviews, identification of the resulting corrective actions and implementing progress systems. It has also been taking part in proficiency testing schemes while rating always among the top laboratories and improving and showing the high professional level of the personnel.

### 3.2 Expanding its cooperation and strengthening relations

The SGL within the framework of its responsibilities and activities cooperates closely with government departments of the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Labour and Social Insurance, Defense, Interior, Communications and Works and Justice and Public Order as well as the Municipalities and Water Supply Councils.

The SGL has also tried to strengthen cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations, Committees and Associations such as the Consumers' Association, the Blue Flag Committee and has tried to conduct all types of information initiatives aiming to educate and inform consumers e.g. on nutritional and health risks.

Cooperation has also been maintained with the private sector where services were also provided on a shared cost basis.

### 3.3 Expanding its participation in Committees

Within its area of responsibilities the SGL has expanded its participation in local governmental committees and till today it participates in:

- (a) Councils of Food, Human Drugs, Veterinary Drugs, Cosmetics, Poisons, Pesticides, Cyprus Milk Board and
- (b) Several Technical committees including the National Committee on Nutrition and the National Committee on Cancer.

### 3.4 Planning and implementing Monitoring/Research programmes

To achieve the best possible outcome of all the activities surrounding risk assessment, within its area of responsibilities, appropriate coordinating

programmes are drafted on the basis of surveillance approach in cooperation with the Competent Authorities.

Therefore, where applicable, SGL plans and implements national control and surveillance programmes with the relevant Departments of all Ministries so as (a) to confirm that products comply with national laws and regulations and (b) to provide preventive measures to existing local problems through target oriented and applied research.

### 3.5 Combining Research with method development, surveillance and problem solving programmes

The SGL implements applied research in its areas of responsibilities incorporating it in the challenging fields of method development, surveillance and problem solving programmes. While doing so, it achieves more effective utilization and management of results.

The results from this research can be utilized for policy making and supervision. The SGL has also succeeded in incorporating part of its responsibilities in European Research Programmes. A number of such research results have seen the light of publication in international journals.

### 3.6 Advancing its technological infrastructure and establishing new laboratories

(a) The implementation of the above research studies has been guaranteed by the purchase of the state-of-the-art equipment such as SNIF-NMR, LC-MS, Electron Microscope, Nicotine measurement equipment and PCR for the newly established Laboratory for genetically modified organisms.

(b) To comply with the continuously emerging requirements of EU Legislation, the SGL has established 5 new laboratories:

- (i) SNIF-NMR for food authenticity,
- (ii) Genetically Modified Organisms for initiating a vigorous monitoring programme on food that may be intentionally or unintentionally genetically modified,
- (iii) Customs Laboratory for tariff classification
- (iv) Microbiological control of human, veterinary medicines and cosmetics and
- (v) Safety of Children's Toys

### 3.7 Enhancing Human Resources

a) Providing continuous educational programmes by both in house training and training abroad gives an incentive to the staff but also provides tools for better performance. Therefore, in house training sessions on ISO 17025 and scholarships to advance scientific knowledge and technological skills were provided to the staff.

b) The SGL has succeeded, after a lot of effort, in increasing its staff. Its wide range of analytical work is covered by 18 Laboratories as shown in the

organogramme under six sections with the support of a registry, stores, library, IT and QA Unit, secretariat, accounts. During 2002, the staff comprised 39 chemists and microbiologists - grade one and two - in the positions of the Director, Senior Chemists and Chemists (as compared to 30 in 2001), 37 Chemists in the positions of senior technicians and technicians and 21, in all, clerks, receptionists, telephonists, cleaners, messengers, store keeper, sterilization and laboratory attendants. Chemists and Microbiologists (28 in all) were also employed on a one-year contract.

### 3.8 International Co-operation

The SGL has continued its endeavour to share and exchange knowledge and technological skills with Universities, Public Health Centres and Organisations and Research Institutes that deal with matters on Public Health, Environmental and Consumer Protection and Crime Prevention and Investigation. A memorandum of understanding has also been signed with IRMM (Institute of Reference Materials and Measurements) of the European Commission for the training of staff in Metrology.

To fulfil its role within the European Union the SGL has joined various networks (e.g. Official Medicines Control Laboratories) towards the implementation of EU-level functions and to EU research programmes. A UNOPS funded project was expanded to cover the monitoring of a sewage treatment plant (Mia-Milia) to safeguard the proper use of sewages. At European level the SGL has been involved in several projects within the European Union 5<sup>th</sup> Research and Development Framework Programme (RDFP) e.g. European Programme QUA for the development of Metrology in Analytical Chemistry and support of pre-accession countries towards Accreditation. The SGL is now preparing its contribution to the forthcoming 6<sup>th</sup> RDFP.

## **4. Financial Resources**

The total number of samples/exhibits sent to the SGL for analysis during 2002, amounted to 22,316. Almost 50% of the total number of samples was for microbiological testing of potable and bottled water, water from swimming pools, sewages and foodstuffs. Most of the samples were analysed without payment as they originated from Government Departments. Some samples, however, were analysed upon payment.

Expenditures incurred by the SGL in 2002 amounted to £2,593,982 (compared to £2,611,888 in 2001) as provided by the Ordinary and Development Budget. Revenue amounted to £65,298 compared £64,014 in 2001, an amount that reflects to fees charged on analysis. There was also an external fund, which amounted to £36,892 from European Projects.