

Taxonomy of Impact Categories and the Taxonomy Structure: Results from the UNEP/SETAC/EPA Hamburg Workshop

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The selection of impact categories is considered dependent upon the application, goal, and scope of the study and is ultimately the responsibility of the study practitioner and commissioner. While it is anticipated that the responsibility will continue to rest with the study practitioner and commissioner, it would be useful to have a broader structure to ensure that at a minimum, a comprehensive list of impact categories have been considered prior to the selection process. Gloria and Bare presented a first draft for a Taxonomy Structure, developed in a compatible way to the Taxonomy Structure of the Life Cycle Initiative at the SETAC Europe Meeting in May of 2003.

The workshop presented the following questions:

Is the Taxonomy Structure in general a good proposal?

Is the Structure of the given main blocks consistent?

1. Is there a need and/or better way to differentiate the Life Support Functions?
2. Looking at the Taxonomy Structure, how well do the subdivisions enable a flexible but consistent framing of LCIA for decision making? For example, is there general agreement on the divisions presented under how to categorize human health? What are the suggested improvements?
3. Looking at the proposed Taxonomy Structure, are there inconsistencies, missing elements, redundant elements, or elements which are presented at too finely differentiated or too coarsely differentiated levels?
4. What are the recommended guidelines for the use of the Taxonomy Structure for specific LCA studies? For example, on which basis and criteria should we select or exclude categories in the Taxonomy Structure for given applications?

This presentation will summarize the findings of the workshop, report the status of current initiatives and next steps.