

THE EUROPEAN XRPD STANDARD AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE PRACTITIONER

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There can be little doubt that consistency is a primary requirement for producing good diffraction data, whatever the application. Within our own projects or laboratories, most of us make reasonable efforts to achieve that. When it comes to comparing data between laboratories and being sure it is “correct”, there is a need for much more consistency than we can achieve individually. Hence the effort that has been put into drawing-up a basic set of standard documents over the last few years.

Many practitioners enjoy the variety of XRPD and the opportunities for doing our own thing. The result has been a steady advance of the technique with many independent-minded operators. Few of us would want to see that change, but a simple comparison of data from different instruments can become a nightmare if we try to take it seriously. When we put such a comparison into a regulatory context, the need for standardisation is compelling.

The overview European XRPD standard seeks to bring order without stifling creativity or enterprise, but also sets a foundation for more specific standards addressing individual products or techniques. The five documents are ‘General Principles’, ‘Procedures’, ‘Instruments’, ‘Terminology’ and ‘Reference Materials’. The first two parts have now been published and the ‘Instruments’ standard should appear soon. The ‘Terminology’ document is also largely complete. Other derivative standards are expected to follow.

The reasons for the standard will be discussed, along with the way it is structured, its potential uses (particularly in relation to pharmaceuticals) and the impact it may have on practitioners.