

# ECHA Stakeholder Engagement Approach



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**ECHA Stakeholder Engagement Approach**

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## Summary

This document describes the European Chemicals Agency's (ECHA) proactive approach to our engagement with stakeholders. The approach builds on a well-established foundation for how the Agency interacts with a wide range of parties, the Commission, other EU agencies, Member States, industry, and civil society stakeholders to help us deliver our legal mandate.

To continue effectively fulfilling our mandate and achieve the EU's goals on chemical safety, we aim to strengthen our existing relationships, while proactively and meaningfully engaging with a broader range of stakeholders.

While ECHA has formalised stakeholder interaction in many of its regulatory processes, where required by legislation, a proactive, consistent, systematic, and transparent engagement approach is important for all our activities where there may be more flexibility to decide on the level of stakeholder involvement. We want our stakeholders to understand why and how we involve them in our work.

ECHA's stakeholder engagement framework includes:

- A proactive stakeholder engagement approach with overarching principles and objectives;
- Definition of stakeholders and our main stakeholder groups;
- Practical working methodology for stakeholder analysis and choice of engagement;
- Engagement toolkit and guidelines for ECHA staff; and
- Key performance indicators to measure the impact of our engagement.

The principles of this approach guide ECHA's daily interactions and activities, ultimately contributing to the delivery of our mandate and maintaining ECHA's reputation as a trusted chemicals agency.

"We are committed to engaging with our stakeholders to ensure their voices are heard and their input is considered to fulfil the Agency's mandate, improve the quality and impact of ECHA's work, and strengthen public confidence."

# Introduction

ECHA transparently communicates its priorities and activities to stakeholders. At the same time, there are obligations regarding our stakeholder relationships laid down in the various regulations within ECHA's remit. Since the establishment of the Agency in 2007, stakeholders have actively contributed to our regulatory efforts through participation in various bodies, networks, expert groups, guidance development, IT user groups and other activities.

We collaborate with experts and representatives from EU institutions, Member States, third countries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) representing industry, workers, environment, public health or animal welfare interests, and academia, to produce our scientific and technical outputs. This collaboration is essential for strengthening public confidence in our work, delivering high-quality outputs, and improving their impact. For example, it allows us to refine our guidance based on stakeholder consultations.

To continue effectively fulfilling our mandate and achieve the EU's goals on chemical safety, we aim to not only strengthen our existing relationships but also proactively and meaningfully engage with a broader range of stakeholders. While ECHA has formalised its stakeholder interaction in many of its regulatory processes, a proactive, consistent, systematic, and transparent engagement approach is important especially for all our activities where there may be more flexibility to decide on the level of stakeholder involvement.

This stakeholder engagement approach establishes principles and working methods to guide our daily interactions and activities, ensuring appropriate, aligned, and systematic engagement with our stakeholders. This directly supports ECHA's strategic goal of collaborating with stakeholders and partners to strengthen public confidence.

Our approach aligns with the strategic goals and priorities outlined in ECHA's Strategy 2024-2028 and Programming Document. It builds further on ECHA's approach towards involving Accredited Stakeholder Organisations in the Agency's work. Annually, we detail our stakeholder activities in the Agency's Work Programme, which is approved by the ECHA Management Board. ECHA's statutory bodies, networks and expert groups adhere to this overarching approach and its principles, while they have also specific procedures for their interaction with stakeholders.

Engagement with the media, ECHA staff, and service providers is not in the scope of this approach.

## Objectives

ECHA engages with its stakeholders to:

- Enhance mutual understanding on ECHA's role, responsibilities and mandate;
- Increase the impact of ECHA's outputs by engaging with relevant stakeholders representing a broader range of interest, who can also act as multipliers of our messages;
- Invite early feedback from our stakeholders to raise the quality and influence of our outputs, and adapt early to changes;
- Improve our communication by proactively providing effective, transparent, targeted, and timely information to our stakeholders. This includes those with regulatory duties to facilitate compliance and those who contribute to our outputs. We want to ensure they can provide feedback and expertise and;
- Be a trusted chemicals agency in line with our strategy and mindful use of resources.

# Principles

Our stakeholder engagement principles are based on ECHA's strategic goal of being a trusted chemicals agency, with a particular focus on our key values such as transparency and collaboration.

These principles are:

 <p><b>Collaborate proactively</b></p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prioritise stakeholder identification and engagement as part of any new tasks or legislation;</li> <li>• deliver high-quality and more impactful outputs by inviting early feedback and input;</li> <li>• facilitate feedback and explain when and how input is considered; and</li> <li>• learn, innovate, and adapt our work based on feedback, and share this knowledge and best practice in our organisation.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Engage openly</b></p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engage with diverse groups representing a wide range of interests and views;</li> <li>• identify and engage potential stakeholders particularly when introducing new tasks or legislation;</li> <li>• regularly review our existing interaction and revisit engagement throughout the implementation of activities;</li> <li>• ensure a balanced representation of interests when inviting input, for example inviting views from industry, NGOs, all relevant sectors and company sizes; and</li> <li>• maintain our independence in our interactions.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Tailor interactions</b></p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure stakeholders can engage with us in areas where mutual value can be added;</li> <li>• produce information that is clear, understandable, timely and accessible to all including those who do not have expert knowledge on chemicals e.g. SMEs; and</li> <li>• develop and tailor our communication channels and tools to meet the needs of our different audiences.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Purposeful engagement</b></p>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set appropriate and measurable objectives for engagement with stakeholders in each specific context; and</li> <li>• evaluate factors like time, budget, and resources, always with our primary goals in perspective.</li> </ul>

## Our main stakeholder groups

Stakeholders are defined as any organisations, associations, groups, or individuals who can impact or are impacted by ECHA's work and goals.

While specific stakeholder groups may be relevant to particular initiatives, ECHA's primary focus is on its most relevant stakeholder groups, and they are to be considered in all of ECHA's activities to ensure effective engagement.

They are:

EU institutional partners	EU institutions, in particular the European Parliament, European Commission, Council and Court of Auditors.
Authorities in EU Member States	National authorities with responsibility for the EU legislations under ECHA's remit in the EU as well as EEA countries.
Other EU Agencies	Other EU agencies, notably those in the environmental (ENVI) domain, including the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), European Environment Agency (EEA), European Medicines Agency (EMA), and European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).
International partners	Multilateral organisations like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and countries outside the EU, including EU accession countries. The State of Finland and the City of Helsinki are included in ECHA's local international stakeholders.
ECHA bodies, networks, and expert groups	ECHA's Management Board, Committee for Risk Assessment, Committee for Socio-economic Analysis, Member State Committee, Biocidal Products Committee, Forum for Exchange of Information on Enforcement and Board of Appeal, as well as informal networks and expert groups established by ECHA or the European Commission.
Industry	Chemical manufacturers, importers, downstream users, and other companies involved in chemical supply chains having regulatory obligations under the EU chemicals legislations in ECHA's remit. This often includes small, medium, and micro (SME) sized companies.
Third parties	<p>These stakeholders include parties that have an interest in and can impact ECHA's work, even if they don't necessarily have regulatory obligations themselves. These include:</p> <p>Non-governmental organisations (NGOs): representing public health, environment, animal welfare interests and consumers.</p> <p>Trade unions and workers' representatives in relation to chemical safety for workers in the workplace.</p> <p>European industry associations: EU level industry associations representing duty holders.</p> <p>Academia and research institutes, with a focus on those with activities in chemicals and regulatory science.</p> <p>Other third parties: representing citizens, local community, individual companies providing services to industry like consultancies, IT service providers and European accredited testing laboratories.</p>



## Accredited stakeholders

To ensure a structured and transparent way of involving stakeholders in ECHA's formal bodies and networks, ECHA runs an accredited stakeholder (ASO) scheme for organisations who have a legitimate interest in ECHA's work. Organisations who have activities at the European Union level, and fulfil our criteria, can apply to become an accredited stakeholder.

To be eligible, an organisation needs to fulfil the following criteria:

- It is legally established within the EU/EEA and has activities at an EU level;
- It has a legitimate interest in ECHA's areas of work;
- It is representative in the field of its competence;
- It is non-profit making and does not exclusively represent individual companies and;
- It is registered in the Transparency Register maintained by the EU. (This criterion only applies if the organisation wishes to participate as an observer in the Committee and Forum meetings of ECHA.)

Accredited stakeholder organisations operate and represent diverse interests at European level, for example industry associations, trade unions, environmental, consumer and animal welfare NGOs.

Accredited stakeholders can express an interest to participate in ECHA's scientific Committee meetings and Enforcement Forum's open sessions. They can also contribute through our scientific expert groups, partner expert groups for guidance development, HelpNet network, and specific meetings like NGO-ECHA dialogue.

With their scientific and technical expertise from the field, accredited stakeholders are important contributors to ECHA's formal bodies and networks. At the same time and in line with our proactive engagement approach, in each situation, ECHA identifies relevant stakeholders according to their influence on and interest in the Agency's work (see "[Our working methodology](#)").

# Our working methodology

To ensure we engage with the most relevant stakeholders in each situation, we analyse them systematically to understand their needs and to have a clear purpose for our engagement activities. We use stakeholder analysis especially when we are introducing new tasks or legislation. We also review our existing work areas to ensure we are involving all the relevant stakeholders. In addition to our generic engagement objectives, we will define specific objectives for different stakeholder groups to be clear on our goals.

## Key steps in our stakeholder analysis and engagement

### Step 1: Identify and map

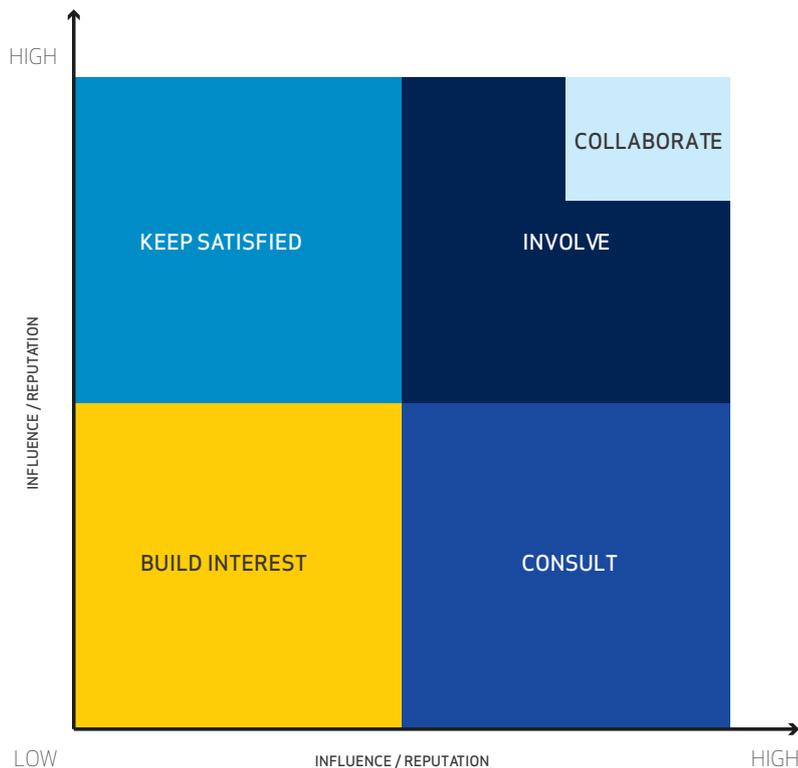
We identify relevant and potential stakeholders at an early stage in each situation, to benefit from diverse perspectives and knowledge. We develop a comprehensive list of potential stakeholders especially when there are new tasks or legislation for ECHA.

Our methodology is to group stakeholders based on level of interest and influence in ECHA's work. This approach helps to understand their needs and develop the most appropriate engagement strategies and plans.

We use influence-interest mapping grid to consider stakeholders in terms of:

- level of interest in ECHA's work and what they expect ECHA to deliver.
- level of influence: the extent to which stakeholders can influence ECHA's work.

Figure 1: Influence-Interest mapping matrix



### Step 2. Choice of engagement

Depending on the identified influence and interest to our work, we define an appropriate engagement level for each stakeholder in a particular situation. The levels of engagement are not mutually exclusive, and multiple levels may be used at the same time:

- Build interest: we inform and create interest via general one-way communication, for example newsletters and website. We aim to increase the level of interest where relevant, for example by providing information sessions to educate and increase awareness.



- **Consult:** we inform and consult at a particular point of our activity, to invite knowledge and feedback through surveys and consultations. We explain in general terms when and how stakeholder input is considered.
- **Keep satisfied:** we maintain satisfaction by informing and consulting on interest areas and identifying and addressing the needs. We make sure there is awareness, understanding and support of our work among these stakeholders. We aim to increase the level of interest where relevant.
- **Involve:** we inform, consult, and engage at specific times during our activities. Additionally, we welcome spontaneous interactions to foster open two-way communication. We ensure that stakeholders' concerns and needs are reflected in our outputs, and we incorporate their feedback to the maximum possible extent. We clearly communicate how their input was considered, promoting mutual interactions.
- **Collaborate:** we inform, consult, and engage at all stages/time span of our initiative, and work to maintain the relationship. We partner with these stakeholders for joint solutions, action plans and activities, and work together to act.

### Step 3. Develop plans to engage with a purpose and measurable actions

From the stakeholder analysis detailed earlier, specific SMART objectives (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) will be set for engaging with different stakeholders, based on the choice of engagement, being clear on the purpose for engagement.

Based on the objectives set, we tailor engagement strategies and plans for overarching ECHA initiatives, as well as for individual or smaller activities for specific stakeholder groups. In designing these plans, we weigh factors such as time, budget, and available resources, always with our primary goals in perspective.

In our planning we select appropriate channels and vehicles for engaging with each stakeholder group. For example: regular dialogues with NGOs and small and medium sized companies (SMEs), user and focus groups for IT tool development and targeted consultations for developing our guidance.

To further refine our engagement strategies, we make use of a toolkit of tactics, vehicles, and best practices tailored for ECHA staff, also to support us in applying the overall engagement approach in our daily activities.

#### Step 4. Revisit engagement

We regularly revisit and update our engagement to identify gaps, monitor progress, address emerging concerns timely and adjust engagement levels based on feedback and our own measurements. For example, a new stakeholder may initially have low interest in ECHA's activities, but over time, this can shift to a more profound level of involvement as their interest grows.

## How we implement and measure impact

The approach and its principles for stakeholder engagement will be applied across ECHA, to guide our daily interactions and activities. Any new specific frameworks developed, and subsequent updates will adhere to these principles and methodology. The approach will be regularly reviewed with the first to be conducted one year following its adoption.

The adherence to the approach will be ensured by our Integrated Management System (IMS) and our certification with the international quality standard ISO 9001, to recognise our ability to provide products and services consistently. The key performance indicators (KPIs) set in our annual Work Programme for stakeholder interaction and perception will help us monitor and measure the impact of our engagement activities.

