

REACH & CLP

Helpdesks support the chemical industry and each other

30 November 2010 is the deadline under REACH for registration of the most hazardous chemical substances as well as substances produced in very large quantities. In addition, 3 January 2011 is the deadline for the CLP notifications.

The registrants of phase-in substances are working hard to meet these important and challenging deadlines. Fortunately they are not alone in the process – the ECHA Helpdesk, the Helpdesk of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), as well as National REACH and CLP Helpdesks are supporting the companies in their registration processes.

HELPDESKS SUPPORT THE INDUSTRY EUROPE-WIDE

The estimated number of substances to be registered by the deadline is more than 4,600 with over 25,000 registration dossier submissions to ECHA. It is evident that the huge number of dossiers is comparable to the number of questions the ECHA Helpdesk receives from registrants.

ECHA Helpdesk supports companies with their questions relating to registrations of chemical substances and focuses its efforts in 2010 to Lead Registrants. Doris Thiemann, team leader of the ECHA Helpdesk gives an overview of ECHA's preparations and the types of services that will be provided to the industry during 2010. Doris Thiemann explains that ECHA offers a variety of activities to support registrants including the Stakeholders' Day. The Stakeholders' Day allows Lead Registrants, i.e. the registrants acting with the

agreement of the other assenting registrants for jointly registering the same substance, to ask the ECHA staff questions during one-on-one sessions. ▶



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Our task is to help the chemicals industry to solve problems related to REACH and CLP.

- ▶ In addition, ECHA is organising a series of webinars for Lead Registrants with key information and hands-on advice on how to successfully prepare and submit a registration dossier. ECHA also opened an online Discussion Forum for Lead Registrants in order to share best practices.

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

While ECHA is allocating significant resources to serve the Lead Registrants, it is also engaged in providing constant support to the National REACH and CLP Helpdesks in EEA (European Economic Area) countries which are committed to assisting Member Registrants.

ECHA organises frequent training sessions for National Helpdesks such as hands-on training on the ECHA IT-tools used by the chemicals industry. Since 2009, the National Helpdesks have been visited as part of an exchange program, providing an opportunity for both the ECHA Helpdesk and National Helpdesks to learn from each other. “We have cooperated with ECHA a lot”, says Ewa Bieniek from the Polish REACH & CLP Helpdesk. “The workshops and meetings they have organised have been useful to exchange information”, Bieniek explains.

HELPING THE MEMBER REGISTRANTS ON A NATIONAL LEVEL

National Helpdesks, such as the Polish REACH & CLP Helpdesk, are trying to activate Member Registrants on a multiple level to register according to REACH and CLP leg-

islation. “The Polish Helpdesk is part of the Polish Competent Authority and our task is to help the chemicals industry in Poland to solve problems related to REACH and CLP”, says Monika Wasiak-Gromek, Chief Specialist of the Polish Helpdesk. “We are assisting all companies, but our main focus is on small and micro enterprises”, Wasiak-Gromek continues. ▶



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- ▶ National Helpdesks are trying to help Member Registrants by, for example, organising events and workshops on REACH and CLP matters. Ewa Bieniek explains that companies really appreciate events and conferences organised by the Polish Helpdesk. “The participating companies can interact with each other and talk to people face-to-face.” In addition, National Helpdesks provide information through leaflets and letters.

NOTED CHALLENGES

According to the Polish Helpdesk, the challenges that companies are facing related to registration are largely the same in every country. National Helpdesks receive a number of enquiries, but most of the questions are related to recognition of substances, exceptions on REACH provisions and completion of SIEFs.

Issues, nevertheless, vary according to the size of the company. “Large companies are usually more prepared as they have the necessary resources. Small and medium-sized enterprises tend to have problems mainly due to their poor knowledge of English”, explains Ewa Bieniek. Dr. Erwin Annys, Director of REACH and Chemicals Policy of Cefic European Chemical Industry Council, agrees: “The English language is a major challenge.” Dr. Annys also notes that companies have somewhat different challenges in areas where the industry as a whole is not as developed and significant as in certain other regions, or where they have less experience with the previous European legislation.

The Polish Helpdesk received a lot of questions from companies during the pre-registration period but at the moment there are fewer questions. “However, questions are much more complicated at the moment and we expect to see an increase as the deadlines approach”, says Wasiak-Gromek. When a more ▶



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- ▶ difficult question is encountered, National Helpdesks consult experts such as toxicologists, lawyers and engineers from different institutions, for example universities. "Experts within the Polish Competent Authority as well as external specialists are extremely helpful", explains Ewa Bieniek. "We also utilise the discussion platform of ECHA, which is called HelpEx", tells Wasiak-Gromek.

NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT

National Helpdesks are doing their best to activate companies to register and notify. This is by no means an easy process. "Confidence is our biggest achievement so far", says Bieniek. "There are companies that fully rely on us."

The problem is, however, that National Helpdesks cannot be there to help the companies in everything and do the work for them. "We help with the interpretation, but the actual registration work has to be done by the companies themselves," states Bieniek.

Doris Thiemann stresses that due to the support of the HelpNet Secretariat, the National Helpdesks are fully prepared for the upcoming deadlines in 2010 and 2011. The Polish Helpdesk encourages companies to act now.

"Do not postpone any activities and preparations of your dossiers. The deadlines are approaching very fast", concludes Bieniek.

Fast facts

REACH:

Regulation for Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals. Manufacturers and importers must have registered if volumes are:

- Phase-in substances over 1,000 tonnes/year in the ECHA system
- CMR / toxic substances (R50/53) of over 1 tonne/year.

Deadline: **1 December 2010.**

CLP:

European Regulation on Classification, Labelling and Packaging of chemical substances and mixtures.

Companies must provide labels that comply with the CLP Regulation.
Deadline: **1 December 2010 and by 1 June 2015, respectively.**

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