

Helsinki, 04 December 2008
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10TH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD

17-18 DECEMBER 2008

Helsinki

Concerns: Work plan “International Activities” 2009

Agenda Point: 19.1

Action requested: For endorsement

1. Introduction

The European Commission has requested the ECHA Secretariat to provide technical and scientific support for steps to improve cooperation between the Community, its Member States, international organisations and third countries on scientific and technical issues related to the safety of substances. The details of the support will be included in an annual work plan for international activities.

The attached draft work plan for of ECHA has been developed by the ECHA Secretariat in consultation with the relevant Commission services.

After having been endorsed by the Board, the work plan will be published on ECHA's website.

2. Short description of the Work Plan 2009

The draft work plan is divided into five main sections: 1) introduction, 2) a general description of priority activities for international cooperation in 2009, 3) work plan itself, 4) short description of resources and finally 5) review of the Work Plan and reporting. The work plan is divided to three items: OECD cooperation, other multilateral activities and lastly, activities related to third countries.

The plan represents a more detailed plan within the general frame laid down in chapter 6 of the ECHA Work Programme for 2009.

It is noted that the Board raised at its earlier meeting the question of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade. In future the support by ECHA to the Commission could also cover the Chemicals Review Committee under that Convention and technical work under other multilateral conventions related to chemicals management. However, support in these fields is not foreseen for 2009.

Particular attention will have to be paid to ensure that the resources allocated to the international activities laid down in the work plan are not exceeded.

3. Action requested

The Management Board is invited to endorse the work plan for international activities of ECHA 2009 as attached to the present note.

Attachment(s): Draft Work Plan for international activities of ECHA for 2009



Draft

Work plan for international activities of ECHA

2009

1 Introduction

The REACH Regulation foresees that the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), in addition to its key tasks in managing and implementing REACH processes, plays a role in the international cooperation and activities related to sound management of chemicals. In certain cases the legal text already provides a clear basis for cooperation. This is the case in particular with the cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to further develop IUCLID format (Art 111). In other cases, the legal text assigns the Management Board to decide on participation of third countries and international organisations in the work of ECHA, Articles 106 and 107) while in other cases the initiative has to come from the European Commission (Article 77(2)(1)).

In its Article 77(2)(1), the REACH Regulation lays down the general frame for the role of ECHA in the international cooperation. The Secretariat shall provide, at the Commission's request, *technical and scientific support for steps to improve cooperation between the Community, its Member States, international organisations and third countries on scientific and technical issues relating to the safety of substances, as well as active participation in technical assistance and capacity building activities on sound management of chemicals in developing countries.* Recitals (95) and (109) further clarify ECHA's role in supporting the implementation of REACH and efforts on international harmonisation of scientific and technical approaches used in REACH.

The first steps have already been taken in relation to establishing ECHA's international role: ECHA is actively participating in and contributing to the funding of joint OECD project on IUCLID, the harmonised templates, the QSAR toolbox as well as the OECD eChemPortal (the Global Portal to Information on Chemical Substances). The Management Board has decided to invite the OECD Secretariat to participate in the work of ECHA as an observer and all three ECHA Committees have subsequently invited the OECD Secretariat to send an observer to the Committee meetings.

In June 2008, the Commission formally requested ECHA to provide technical and scientific support to certain international activities, in particular to the cooperation with the OECD, the work concerning Persistent Organic Pollutants, and support to regulatory dialogues with the main trading partners of the EU.

To ensure appropriate coordination with the European Commission in these areas, ECHA was requested to base its activities on an annual work plan agreed with the Commission.

This first ECHA work plan on international activities has been developed at the request of the Commission and in consultation with the Commission. It aims to provide a solid basis for the different international activities ECHA should provide support to. Taking into account the limited resources ECHA can allocate to international activities, the work plan also provides steering on the relative priority of the different activities. It should be noted that the Commission may at any time request further support from ECHA but in that case additional resources would normally need to be provided.

2 Priority activities for international cooperation in 2009

The overall objective of ECHA's work on international activities is to provide the Commission with Scientific and Technical support in its international activities. Therefore ECHA's international work is based on the obligations assigned to it by legislation, focusing on issues which increase scientific and technical harmonisation, as well as contributing to increased knowledge on REACH worldwide.

In 2009, ECHA will give priority to following **types of activities**:

- Activities that develop international standards which can be directly applied for the implementation of REACH (in particular OECD activities);
- Activities which directly support the understanding of the implementation of REACH in third countries;
- International activities which assess chemicals falling within the scope of REACH;
- Activities which exchange practical experience between the ECHA and similar agencies in third countries bi- or multilaterally.

In general, the **methods of support** ECHA can provide to the Commission can entail:

- participation in international conferences, workshops and meetings
- participation as a member or as an observer in international working groups
- provision of written comments and briefings to the Commission services
- delivering presentations in international events or events organised in or for third countries
- organising workshops or training events
- providing written information and training material, mainly via ECHA website.
- exchanging practical experiences with other regulatory agencies.

3 Work plan for 2009

3.1 OECD

ECHA will in 2009 participate in a number of OECD activities which are of relevance for the implementation of REACH, in particular the project management of the Global Portal to Information on Chemical Substances and the further development of the QSAR-Toolbox. The Agency will also contribute to the work of the Task Force on Hazard assessment (formerly called the Task Force on Existing Substances). Other OECD related activities in which ECHA will be involved include contributing to the work of the Task Force on Exposure Assessment, the Harmonised Templates Project, the work on the health and environmental aspects of nanomaterials and to the work of the Task Force on Harmonisation of Classification and Labelling and its subgroups, if appropriate. ECHA may also hold, if necessary, joint conferences with the OECD on specific topics. When necessary, ECHA may participate also in other relevant OECD meetings, including the Joint Meetings.

A detailed plan of OECD activities is provided in Annex 1, part 1.

3.2 Other multilateral activities

As requested by the European Commission, ECHA will support the Commission's work on the **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)**, in particular the work carried out under the POP Review Committee (POP RC), by making one technical expert available at the yearly POP Review Committee meeting and by providing technical comments in the inter-sessional phase. As the 4th Conference of the Parties (COP) will address for the first time new proposals for listing of further substances, ECHA may also send the expert to COP-4 to support the Commission delegation in the technical aspects of the negotiations.

Considering the role and the different tasks given to ECHA in the forthcoming regulation on Classification, Labelling and Packaging of substances and mixtures, it is foreseen that it would be useful that ECHA takes part in the work of the UN ECE Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals and its correspondence groups in case the work is of scientific and technical nature even though the most relevant work for ECHA is carried out in the OECD Task Force on Harmonisation of Classification and Labelling.

ECHA's role in implementing REACH substantially associates the Agency with topics of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). ECHA will be available to attend and support relevant international meetings during 2009.

A detailed plan of these activities is provided in Annex 1, part 2.

3.3 Cooperation with and support to third countries

A specific target group among third countries consists of the **candidate countries** (Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey) and **the potential Western Balkan candidate countries** to the EU. Additional funds may be allocated to ECHA from a new transitional programme funded through IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession) to support these countries in preparing them for working with ECHA. Moreover, subject to additional funding, ECHA may provide support to specific TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument) projects addressing chemicals management issues.

One of the main objectives in the cooperation with third countries is to increase the understanding of the implications of the REACH Regulation in **the neighbouring countries** such as the Russian Federation and European Neighbourhood Policy partner countries (in particular Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine as well as Mediterranean partner countries) and **important other trade partners of the EU**. Particular emphasis is given to arising awareness and understanding on REACH in the chemicals management authorities of the trade partners and, where time allows, also in companies exporting chemicals or articles to the EU. To this end ECHA will send, to the extent possible, speakers to relevant events and provide information packages to third countries as well as admit visitors from third countries.

When assessing speaking or visit requests from third countries, priority will be given to events and visits that directly or through multiplying effect can reach a large key target audience. When travelling is required, special attention is paid to involving the Commission Delegation so that they could in future occasions deliver similar presentations and responses to questions. ECHA also plans to organise on key topics, either by ourselves or with collaborating partners, webinars targeted especially at third country industries. Such events can together with video-conferences provide a feasible and environmentally conscious alternative to physical participation in an event.

Concerning the main EU trade partners and the **regulatory dialogues** between the EU and certain third countries such as USA and Canada, ECHA may provide technical and scientific support to the Commission on *ad hoc* basis, provided that there are sufficient resources available at the time of the request. A higher priority is given to **initiating contacts between ECHA and the relevant regulatory agencies of the OECD countries outside the EEA**, such as Australia, Switzerland, the USA, Canada, Japan and South Korea as well as China and India, aiming at the exchange of best practice and at cooperation at practical level.

ECHA will also be seized by any request by third countries to participate in the work of the Agency. Such requests will be addressed separately in accordance with Article 106 of the REACH by the Management Board, in close coordination with the Commission and are as such outside this international work plan.

4 Resources

In 2009, approximately 4 person years is foreseen to be allocated to the international activities. This includes the resources needed for the general coordination of the international activities as well as the expert resources when actually participating in the activities.

Concerning the financial resources, the ECHA budget for 2009 foresees € 550,000 for international projects and other international activities, including mission costs related to international cooperation]. From 2008 budget 1.6 million has been allocated for the QSAR toolbox, the project will be running until 2012. Moreover, €400,000 that was allocated in 2008 to the Global portal will be spent in 2009. The biggest part of these funds is allocated to the joint OECD projects.

As explained above, additional financial resources may be made available through certain Community programmes. It is foreseen that the ECHA's own human resources may not be sufficient to deliver (e.g. an extensive amount of targeted training programmes). In such cases outsourcing of part or the whole of the work to third parties is considered.

5 Review of the Work Plan and Reporting

If necessary, the 2009 work plan can be reviewed in summer 2009. The purpose of the review would in particular be to ensure that the priorities laid down in the plan are still valid and up to date and that the overall workload is in line with the resources available to these activities. The review can be initiated either by ECHA or by the Commission services.

In addition to the case by case reporting from different meetings and missions, reporting on the international activities will be included in the ECHA's annual activity report.

Multilateral Activities to be covered by ECHA during 2009

Part 1 – OECD Cooperation

Activity	ECHA Directorate/Unit	Priority	Comments
Joint Meeting	A/B	Medium	Presentation by ECHA in June 2009
Task Force on Hazard Assessment ¹	B	Very High	Several subgroups (to be clarified)
SIDS (Screening Information Data Set) Initial Assessment Meeting (SIAM)	B	Very High	
IUCLID user group Expert panel and work on Harmonised templates	C	Very High (Essential to REACH implementation)	Preparation of the meetings, follow-up of the work of the Groups, introduction of the requirements into IUCLID5
TF on Classification and Labelling	B	High	
TF on Environmental Exposure Assessment	A C	High	
OECD QSAR Activities Development of the toolbox (project management and participation to the OECD meetings):	C B	Very High (Essential to REACH implementation)	Main work is carried out at ECHA
Working Party on Nanomaterials	B C	Medium	
Working Group of National coordinators of the Test guidelines Programme -Expert groups	B	Medium/High	Further discussion needed with COM concerning the role of ECHA
IT tools	C	High	
eChemPortal, The Global Portal to Information on Chemical Substances	C	High	Development of the 2 nd phase of the portal (project management and participation to OECD meetings)

¹ Previously Task Force on Existing Chemicals Programme

Good Laboratory Practice and Compliance Monitoring (no established WG)	B	Medium	ECHA contact person to be added only on mailing list
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Part 2 – Other multilateral activities

Activity	ECHA Directorate/Unit	Priority	Comments
Stockholm Convention			
4 th Meeting of the Conference of the parties (COP-4), May 2009	A/B	Medium	Participation of 1 (or possibly 2) POP expert requested by COM
5 th meeting of the POP Review Committee, October-November 2009	B	High	Participation of 1 (or possibly 2) POP expert requested by COM
Other multilateral			
SAICM: International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM2)	A	Medium	Support to side-events organised by COM show-casing REACH at ICCM-2 10-15 May 2009 in Geneva
Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (2 meetings)	B	Medium	Participation if so requested by COM