

## Press Release: ECHA-PR-08-11

Helsinki, June 3, 2008

### EUROPEAN CHEMICALS AGENCY IS OPERATIONAL

12 months after its creation, the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has evolved from a few staff to a fully functioning organisation of 200 employees. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2008, the Agency launched the REACH-IT portal and started to accept pre-registrations and other data submissions from industry. To commemorate the move from the build-up to the operational phase, a formal inauguration ceremony for the Agency was held at the Helsinki City Hall today.

Commission President José Manuel Barroso, Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen, Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen, European Parliament Vice-President Gérard Onesta, Mayor of Helsinki Jussi Pajunen, and ECHA's Executive Director Geert Dancet addressed an audience of Agency staff and guests.

ECHA's Executive Director Geert Dancet said: *"During the past year, ECHA has successfully met the targets set in the REACH Regulation and became fully operational as planned. The time lines for us have been ambitious, the number of projects challenging and the goals demanding. By meeting these, ECHA demonstrates the potential to become the most modern regulatory agency"*.

### Our Achievements

During the past twelve months, ECHA has been recruiting staff, building up its organisation and structures, setting up standard operating procedures and steering the building of the REACH-IT system necessary for ECHA to receive REACH dossiers and operate the REACH processes.

The staff has grown from just a few last June to about 200 today, including staff members from nearly all EU Member States. The recruitment process and training of new employees has been and will

remain a major activity for ECHA. Several training sessions have also be organised to train the trainers and helpdesk operators from Member States. Over 100 trainers across the EU have already participated in these sessions.

The Management Board, the Forum on REACH enforcement and the three scientific committees (Risk Assessment Committee, Socio-economic Analysis Committee and Member State Committee) have been established and are fully functioning. A policy is in place to ensure adequate participation of stakeholder organisations in all these bodies and thereby achieve a high standard of transparency. Sixty organisations have already expressed interest in actively co-operating with ECHA.

ECHA has been providing guidance and helpdesk services since 1 June 2007. All essential guidance documents for entry into operation have been published in the guidance section of the ECHA website. The ECHA helpdesk has supported companies on some 2000 REACH related questions and over 2500 IUCLID 5 questions have been answered. In addition, the ECHA helpdesk is co-ordinating a network of national REACH helpdesks to promote consistent responses across the EU.

The ECHA website was rapidly upgraded from initial 4 to 22 languages and new sections have been added on pre-registration and data submission. The translation of the new web pages is proceeding progressively, and in parallel, key information leaflets, guidance documents and other publications are also being translated. Up to now about 1000 pages of documentation have been or are in process of being translated. The Agency has also initiated more dynamic dissemination of information by establishing a REACH Communicators' Network and by actively distributing news via the national REACH helpdesks and Member State competent authorities as well as by sending ECHA News Alerts to industry.

Our highest priority in preparing for entry into operation has been to ensure that industry will be able to fulfil all their obligations as of 1 June 2008. Data submission procedures have been established for pre-registrations, PPORD notifications, inquiries and registrations. The REACH-IT system that will form the basis of ECHA data management will be used for company sign up and online entry and submission of pre-registrations. During the initial period, PPORD, inquiry and registration submissions need to be carried out using temporary data submission procedures. ECHA is making all possible efforts to have REACH-IT fully operational as early as possible. Up-to-date information is available on the ECHA website and is communicated to the subscribers of the ECHA News Alerts.

ECHA has also initiated interaction with the stakeholders by participating in REACH conferences and workshops. The staff has already given presentations in more than 20 events across the EU. The European Commission has asked ECHA to develop its international contacts to increase the awareness of companies from third countries about their obligations under REACH.

## Next challenges

From June 1 to December 1 2008, the Agency will face its first operational challenges. It will handle the pre-registration of substances and intermediates. About 200,000 pre-registration files are expected. At the same time, from June 1 2008 companies can start submit notifications, inquiries and registrations. Over 2000 such submissions are expected to arrive before the end of the year. Evaluation of registrations will also start this year and ECHA is expected to take its first evaluation decisions before the end of this year.

Other priority areas include completion of the REACH-IT system and by end of the year the publication of the list of pre-registered substances and the publication of first candidate list of substances of very high concern.

## Further Information

**European Chemicals Agency** web site at: <http://echa.europa.eu>

**Press Memo 1: European Chemicals Agency** on the Press Office page of the ECHA website.

**Press Memo 2: Implementing REACH in Practice** on the Press Office page of the ECHA website.

**Press Memo 3: REACH Case Story Summaries** on the Press Office page of the ECHA website.

## ECHA Press Contact

[press@echa.europa.eu](mailto:press@echa.europa.eu)

