



ECHA

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Press memo:

1: European Chemicals Agency ECHA

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The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) in Helsinki hosts its formal inauguration today. This coincides with the start of the key processes of pre-registration and registration under REACH. ECHA and the European Commission therefore remind companies to pre-register their chemicals before 1 December 2008. Research and development related notifications (PPORD), inquiries on substances and mandatory registration of non phase-in substances started also on 1 June 2008.

ECHA – European Chemicals Agency

1. How important is ECHA for REACH?

The European Chemicals Agency will play a key role in day-to-day REACH operations. It will also provide information on REACH, registered chemicals and ECHA to stakeholders, media and general public.

2. What are the advantages of having a central agency for chemicals?

As REACH is applied at the EU level, a central Agency can achieve the advantages of consistency and efficiency while ensuring an equal treatment of companies manufacturing or importing chemicals throughout the EU.

3. What is ECHA's role with regard to other EU bodies?

As a regulatory Agency, ECHA, will be independent from other European Union bodies. It will be managed autonomously and have its own staff with the full legal capacity to act in its own name.

It will be linked to other EU Institutions, through the members of the Management Board. The European Union will exercise financial control over the Agency and EU Staff Regulations will apply.

4. Will ECHA be responsible for all work related to REACH processes?

No, the Agency will have a co-ordinating role in managing the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction processes. Member States will carry out the evaluation work and in most cases will prepare proposals to subject substances to harmonised classification, restriction or authorisation. The decisions on authorising and restricting the use of a chemical are made by the European Commission.

5. What will ECHA do?

The European Chemicals Agency:

- manages and carries out technical, scientific and administrative aspects of REACH: it receives the pre-registrations and registrations and will co-ordinate the evaluation, authorisation and restriction processes;
- ensures consistency at Community level in relation to these aspects;
- provides the Member States and the institutions of the Community with the best possible scientific and technical advice on questions relating to chemicals which fall under REACH;
- manages IT based tools, data bases and guidance documents;
- supports national helpdesks and runs a helpdesk for registrants.

The ECHA website provides industry with guidance and tools and general public with a range of information on registered chemicals

6. How much power of decision does it have?

The European Chemicals Agency has decision powers which cover the registration and evaluation processes.

7. What is the organisational structure of ECHA and the role of its various parts?

Executive Director - the legal representative of the Agency, responsible for the day-to-day management and administration, including responsibility over its finances. The Executive Director reports to the Management Board.

Management Board - the governing body of the Agency, responsible for nominations, adopting the financial planning, budget work programme, annual reporting & strategic documents. Its membership comprises representatives from each EU Member State, the Commission, the EU Parliament and observers from NGOs and industry.

Secretariat - consisting of various Directorates, supports the Committees and Forum and undertakes work on registration & evaluation processes as well as preparation of guidance, maintenance of databases, website and helpdesk.

Member State Committee - resolves potential differences of opinion on draft evaluation decisions proposed by the Agency or Member States and makes proposals for identification of substances of very high concern.

Risk Assessment Committee – composed of independent experts, it prepares opinions on applications for authorisation, on proposals for restrictions and on classification and labelling.

Committee for Socio-economic Analysis – composed of independent experts, it prepares opinions on applications for authorisation, on proposals for restrictions and on questions relating to the socio-economic impact of possible legislative action.

Forum - coordinates a network of Member States' competent authorities responsible for enforcement

Board of Appeal – considers appeals against decisions taken by the Agency

8. Who is the Executive Director of ECHA?

Geert Dancet is the first Executive Director of ECHA. His term is five years, renewable once up to another five years. Geert Dancet served as the Interim Executive Director since the Agency started on 1 June 2007 until his term as the Executive Director started on 1 January 2008.

Economist by training, Mr. Dancet was born in 1956. He is Belgian and married with four children. He likes travelling, biking and jogging.

9. How many people will work at ECHA?

In June 2008 there are about 200 people working at the Agency.

By 2010, the Agency is expected to have its full capacity of 450 staff members.

9. How is the Agency recruiting its staff?

Recruitment for ECHA is via open selection procedure following publication of a call for expressions of interest or a vacancy notice. Information on open selections will be posted on the ECHA web site: http://echa.europa.eu/opportunities_en.asp

People interested in joining ECHA staff in Helsinki are advised to check regularly the Working with Us section on the ECHA website. All open positions are advertised there.

10. What is the annual budget of ECHA? Where do the funds come from?

The Agency's budget for 2007 is €15 million. Over the next 15 years the annual budget is expected to be on average €90 million. It will be largely financed from the fees paid by industry. The remaining balance will be covered by the EU budget as approved by the European Parliament and Council.

11. What ECHA been doing since 1 June 2007?

During the first year, ECHA has been setting up its operations. Key tasks have included the recruitment and training of staff while establishing ECHA's operational and IT procedures. The three ECHA committees and the Member States Forum have been established and Member State and industry trainers have been trained.

In parallel, ECHA has been operating a helpdesk that has been responsible for providing advice to companies on REACH and IUCLID 5 data base application. It has also upgraded its multilingual website from initial four to 22 languages and added news sections with additional information (e.g. pre-registration & data submission).

12. What next?

In the second half of 2008, the main focus will be on successful pre-registration and registration management, including completion of the IT tools. The recruitment will continue on high level.

About 180,000 pre-registration files are expected to be received in six months. At the same time, from 1 June 2008, companies can start sending notifications, inquiries and registrations. By end of the year over 2000 research and development related notifications, inquiries on substances and registrations may arrive in total.

13. What will be the following challenges after 2008?

The next big challenge is 2010. ECHA will have the first registration deadline for the high volume substances and the very hazardous ones. By that date, all the companies need to present all the inventory documentation for the classification and labelling of any dangerous substances.

14. Question: How does ECHA co-operate with industry and stakeholders?

Cooperation and communication with all stakeholders – including chemical and other industries – is important for ECHA. In many cases it is also provided in the REACH Regulation.

Chemical manufacturers and importers can be seen as the major clients of ECHA. They will have to pay for the different REACH procedures and in return they have the right to expect to get their dossiers processed efficiently and correctly.

ECHA has to be also able to develop tools and guidance that make REACH workable for the companies – big and small – as possible. Therefore dialogue with industry in the context of the preparing and updating of guidance is essential.

Industry and interest groups (trade unions, environmental NGOs) have observer seats on the ECHA Management Board. In the future, stakeholders may also have access to follow Committee meetings as observers. Presentation in conferences and seminars and informal exchange of views with stakeholders is also part of the ECHA work.

15. How will ECHA minimize animal testing?

Companies registering the same substance need to share the available data from animal tests and are encouraged to share data from other tests. This is one component that is expected to reduce animal testing. The other is that any new animal tests can only be conducted after companies receive explicit agreement from ECHA.

If new tests are proposed to be carried out companies need to prepare a testing proposal. ECHA will then assess if the proposed test is really necessary and useful to complete the information on a particular chemical. Before agreeing on any new animal test ECHA will verify whether reliable data cannot be provided for by the 'read-across' of test results concerning other similar substances or by using of alternative testing methods or computer simulation.

16. Why was Helsinki chosen as a host of the Agency?

Finland was interested in having one of the new EU agencies in the early 21st century when the location of ten EU agencies was discussed. In 2004 the heads of states decided on the placement of these agencies and Finland got ECHA. Helsinki, the capital and the most international city in Finland, was an obvious choice for ECHA's location in the country.

Further Information

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

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.

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