



ECHA/PR/08/02/en

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The Member State Committee of ECHA starts working

The first meeting of the Member State Committee took place in Helsinki 26-27 February. This Committee will play a key role in decision making of the Agency. Its essential task will be to aim for unanimous agreements in such cases where Member States of the EU have diverging views on the Agency's draft decisions or proposals for candidates as Substances of Very High Concern. The first meeting set the scene for the Committee's work by putting down the first operating rules, work processes and priorities.

ECHA's Executive Director, Geert Dancet, highlighted in his opening statement: *The resolution of divergences of opinions on proposals for the Substances of Very High Concern and testing proposals are critical measures of success of this Committee. Under REACH it is indispensable in finding unanimous agreement on the Agency's draft decisions.*

The Member State Committee (MSC) was established based on appointments made by the Member States. The Committee consist of one member from each of the 27 Member States. They are appointed for a 3-year term. The list of the members is available on the website of the Agency and is updated whenever a Member State alters its appointee. The link to the relevant page is available at the end of this document. The meetings are chaired by Anna-Liisa Sundquist who joined the Agency in mid February.

A thorough discussion on the MSC's rules of procedure resulted in an agreement on the draft rules. These rules will safeguard the transparency of the MSC's operations while maintaining its independence and ensuring confidentiality of data. The rules cover also the participation of observers to the meetings. They will come into effect after the formal adoption by the ECHA Management Board.

The Committee reviewed its role in the work processes of the Agency and of the Member States in line with the REACH Regulation. Efficient working procedures will be essential to enable the decision making within the very tight deadlines specified by the Regulation. The MSC will work closely with the Committee for Risk Assessment.

One of the priority tasks of the MSC will be to find agreement on substances proposed to be included in the candidate list of substances of very high concern in those cases where comments are received on the proposals. Comments may come from Member States, ECHA, Commission, and other interested parties. Substances of Very High Concern are carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction (so called CMR substances), or persistent, bioaccumulative or toxic (PBT substances), or very persistent or very bioaccumulative (vPvB substances). A candidate list will be the first step in identifying substances for authorisation. Use of substances that need an authorisation will require companies to prove that risks of their uses are properly controlled.

Agreements on testing proposals made by the companies in their registration dossier will be another priority on the MSC's work programme. Reaching unanimous agreement on draft decisions of the Agency relating to compliance checks will be its third major task.

The Member State Committee is foreseen to meet five times in 2008. The next meetings are scheduled for September, October, November and December.

Other ECHA Bodies

The Forum on enforcement started operating already in 2007. The Committee for Risk Assessment had its first meeting in January 2008. The Committee for Socio-Economic Analysis will meet for the first time in April.

Links:

General information on the ECHA Committees

http://echa.europa.eu/about/organisation/committees_en.html

Members of the Member State Committee

<http://echa.europa.eu/doc/071218MembersOfMemberStateCommittee.pdf>

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