

<i>In this Issue</i>	<i>page</i>
From the ED	1
Editorial	1
From the ED's Office	2
Events	3
News on REACH and ECHA	3
Interview	5
Agency Bodies	7
Guidance	8
Agency Networks	8
Stakeholders	9
Statistics	9
Living in Helsinki	10

From the Executive Director

Dear Reader,

As Executive Director of the European Chemicals Agency I am proud to introduce to you this first ECHA newsletter. It is designed as a recurrent communication tool between ECHA and the REACH stakeholders and authorities. The newsletter will provide you with an easy readable update of all activities of the Agency as well as lively interest stories and pictures of daily life within ECHA.

I have received a lot of positive feedback on the start of ECHA's operations as of 1 June 2008. To manage all operations, ECHA has had to grow fast and simultaneously take on many challenges in just 12 months since its establishment. Over the coming years ECHA will remain the fastest growing EU body with a long list of regulatory tasks with tight deadlines set by the REACH legislation.

Compared to the previous chemicals legislation, REACH also implies a change in the mindset of industry and authorities as well as a much wider scope of affected players. ECHA can only achieve its objectives by closely involving and consulting all players and interest groups in its activities. This newsletter fits well into our policy of transparency.

I hope that you will find the newsletters interesting and attractive. We are looking forward to your feedback.

Kind regards,

Geert Dancet



Editorial

Dialogue with the stakeholders and information for the general public play an important role for ECHA as they support the Agency's overall quest for openness and transparency – key values of ECHA arising from the REACH Regulation.

The Agency communicates with the external world through a number of channels. The key channel is the website but publications, press releases, news alerts, networks, conferences etc. also play an important role.

There is a growing interest in ECHA and its work among the stakeholders and the media. In line with its communication strategy, ECHA is now launching this Newsletter, an additional communication channel, through which the Agency strives to better meet the information needs of our 'customers' and of other interest groups.

The Newsletter is made available in PDF so that it can be printed. We hope that readers find this new channel useful. Our plan is to publish the Newsletter bimonthly. The length may vary but we hope that you will find the contents interesting and useful. We welcome any feedback to develop further this Newsletter in the future. The feedback should be sent to:

info@echa.europa.eu

Juhani Sormunen
ECHA Communications

FOUR ECHA DIRECTORS SELECTED

ECHA management recruitments are progressing. The selection procedures for the Director for Cooperation, for Assessment, for Procedures and Processes, and for Resources have been completed. The new Directors are foreseen to take up their duties in the Agency during the autumn.

The new Directors are:

Mr Andreas Herdina, Director of Cooperation (Dir. A)

Mr Jukka Malm, Director of Assessment (Dir. B)

Ms Christel Musset, Director of Procedures and Processes (Dir. C)

Mr Jef Maes, Director of Resources (Dir. R)

The Director positions became vacant as the initial occupants, seconded Commission officials, will be returning to the European Commission according to their contracts.

Directorate C, Procedures and Processes, is new and will initially be responsible for a number of REACH operations, covering among others pre-registration and registration, substance identification and confidentiality claims. The Directorate will also be responsible for development of all scientific IT tools including REACH-IT.

All new Directors have extensive work experience in their respective fields of responsibility.



Mr Herdina is Austrian and currently serving as Head of Unit in the External Relations Directorate General of the European Commission.



Mr Malm is Finnish and presently Director of Expert Services in the Finnish Environment Institute. He is also the Chairman of the ECHA Management Board and will step down from this position.



Ms Musset is French and has been serving as Head of Unit in Directorate B of the Agency since September 2007. Her previous employment was with the European Chemicals Bureau in Italy.



Mr Maes is Belgian. He is currently serving as Head of Administrative Services in the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in Stockholm, Sweden, another EU regulatory agency.

GEERT DANCET IN HEARING AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On 14 July 2008, the ECHA Executive Director, Geert Dancet, visited the European Parliament in Brussels and held an exchange of views with the Committee for Environment, Food Safety and Public Health.

Mr. Dancet gave an overview on the state of affairs at ECHA. In his presentation he focused on the developments since the entry into operation of the REACH processes on 1 June 2008 and the challenges that lay ahead. In particular he gave an account of the status of REACH IT - the IT system developed

for the REACH implementation - the current situation with regard to fee revenues and ECHA's communication activities. The presentation was followed by an exchange of views with representatives of the political groups. The discussion focused on budgetary aspects, the functioning of REACH-IT and the progress on establishing the candidate list of Substances of Very High Concern. Members of the Committee welcomed the achievements of ECHA and its staff in setting up a fully functioning Agency within a challenging timeframe.

8th MEETING OF THE ECHA MANAGEMENT BOARD

The ECHA Management Board held its 8th meeting on 18 and 19 June 2008.

Amongst others, the members of the Management Board were briefed comprehensively on the functioning of the REACH processes after the entry into operation on 1 June 2008, on the progress towards establishing the first candidate list for au-

thorisation and on a request by the Commission for ECHA's support on international activities. The Board also heard a report on the use of the Agency's budget 2008. Furthermore, the Board discussed the adaptation of the Agency's Financial Regulation to the upcoming revised Framework Financial Regulation for Agencies and the progress of the work in the working groups on reimbursement for REACH tasks to

Member States and ECHA's multi-annual work programme.

As regards the REACH operations which started on 1 June 2008, the Board members congratulated the Executive Director and the Agency's staff for successfully ensuring that companies are able to fulfil all their obligations despite remaining inadequacies of the REACH IT-system.

The Board took decisions on the rules on transparency regarding the safety of substances. It also appointed the chairperson and members of the Board of Appeal as well as additional members of the Committee for Risk Assessment.

Once adopted, the minutes of the ECHA Management Board meetings are published on ECHA's web page at

http://echa.europa.eu/about/organisation/management_board_en.asp

Events

ECHA INAUGURATION DAY

The inauguration ceremony of ECHA was held on 3 June 2008 at the Helsinki City Hall to celebrate the move from the build-up to the operational phase.

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 Executive Director Geert Dancet addressed an audience of Agency staff and guests.

"I am sure that the Agency will be the focus which will permit Europeans to work together to achieve the important aims of REACH," Commission President Barroso said.

Vice-President Verheugen wished ECHA success in the challenges lying ahead and assured the Agency of continuing support from the Commission.



Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Vice-President Günter Verheugen handed over the list of substances considered registered under REACH at a symbolic ceremony to Geert Dancet. Photo by Pertti Nisonen

COMING UP:

10.10.2008

ECHA's First Stakeholders' Day

Finlandia Hall, Helsinki

http://echa.europa.eu/news/events_en.asp

News on REACH and ECHA

ECHA TRANSLATIONS

The REACH Regulation defines the official EU languages as the linguistic regime of the Agency. Therefore the ECHA Internet pages and printed publications addressed to wide audiences across the EU are made available in the following 22 languages: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, Slovene, Spanish, Swedish.

The Agency is obliged by the REACH Regulation to use the EU Translation Centre (CdT) in Luxembourg for all translations. The Communication Unit is co-ordinating the submission and management of ECHA translations. Last year 16 documents (about 700 pages) were sent to translation. In 2008 the number of documents will be much higher.

The greatest challenge in the translation process is to ensure appropriate quality of the documents in the 22 languages. Internal reviewers have been used until now. Various options in making the review process more efficient are currently being considered.

Our longer term objective is to ensure that the translations published by ECHA will be produced efficiently and that their quality satisfies readers. Achieving this target is essential for ECHA to be perceived credible and equitable across the EU.

PRE-REGISTRATION

By 28 July 2008, 4627 companies had signed up in REACH-IT and created 32191 pre-registrations which refer to 13883 substances. 86 % of the received pre-registrations are listed in the EINECS. 6 % have been pre-registered by using the CAS number and CAS name; 3.5 % were pre-registered with a name only. The remaining 4.5 % refer to multi-constituent substances.

For substances which were pre-registered by chemical names or other names, ECHA strongly recommends the use of internationally recognised nomenclature such as IUPAC or CAS. Trade names and internal company codes should be avoided as these names are not internationally recognised or used. In addition, it is encouraged to indicate the names in the English language. Consistent use of the guidance for identification and naming of substances is needed to ensure that potential registrants can be grouped in the same pre-SIEF. ECHA recognises that some companies may have difficulties in preregistering their substances properly. Where possible, ECHA contacts these pre-registrants and gives them the possibility to re-submit the information in a correct manner.

The "bulk" pre-registration was made available on 22 July 2008. This is the functionality which enables companies to prepare

their pre-registrations outside of the REACH-IT system and submit them in one step to ECHA. This route of pre-registration is valid only for substances or constituents of substances listed on EINECS. In order to facilitate the process of the bulk pre-registration files, the amount of substances allowed in one file is limited to 500.

The bulk pre-registration file must be fully compliant with the REACH-IT pre-registration format (XML pre-registration format) to be successfully processed by REACH-IT. This XML format has been published in February 2008 on the IUCLID 5 web site in advance of the start of the pre-registration phase, so that company and third-party vendors could prepare interfaces to existing systems and generate bulk pre-registration files in the appropriate XML format from data stored in these systems. One of the systems enabling the preparation of bulk pre-registration files is the IUCLID 5 pre-registration module available on the IUCLID 5 web site.

The number of bulk pre-registration files received by 28 July included 195 successfully processed files corresponding to an overall number of 5964 pre-registrations. 29 files could not be accepted for processing due to format errors and other inconsistencies.

SUBMISSIONS VIA THE TEMPORARY SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

By 28 July 2008, ECHA had received 278 PPORD notification dossiers, 145 inquiries for non phase-in substances, 9 regular registrations and 40 registrations for intermediates. Some of these were duplicate submissions. Many of these dossiers could not be processed further because of incorrect information (e.g. missing submission form or inconsistent dossier identification). Statistics on the numbers of dossiers which could be accepted for further processing are provided below, together with a list of the most common reasons for rejection.

In addition to industry dossiers, ECHA has also received from Member States 16 proposals for identification of substances of very high concern and 6 proposals for harmonised Classification and Labelling.

Of the 145 inquiry dossiers, 112 were accepted for further processing and 87 of these have been assessed so far. Only 5 of these resulted in the issue of an inquiry number and, where relevant, details of other potential and previous registrants and (robust) study summaries for the same substance. Those inquiries that could not be processed were due to the dossier not containing all of the information required by Article 26(1) of the REACH Regulation and/or the information being insufficient to allow us to verify the substance identity. In order to improve the

rate of successful inquiry submissions ECHA is currently preparing a Q&A document on the inquiry process, and is developing IT tools that will allow companies to pre-screen their dossiers.

Of the 278 PPORD notifications, 178 were accepted for further processing. For registration, 4 of the 9 regular dossiers were accepted and 25 of the 40 dossiers for registration of isolated intermediates could be accepted for further processing.

The five most common reasons that dossiers cannot be accepted for processing are as follows:

- dossier identity number mentioned in the submission form was not consistent with the dossier identity number of the submitted IUCLID 5 dossier
- the company did not previously sign-up in REACH-IT, or incorrectly specified their company identity number
- an electronic version of the submission form and/or IUCLID 5 dossier was not provided
- the submitted dossier did not conform to the XML format the compulsory declaration box at the bottom of the submission form had not been ticked.

ECHA urges all companies to carefully follow the data submission manuals on the REACH-IT pages of the ECHA website.

TECHNICAL COMPLETENESS CHECK

The outcome of the technical completeness check has shown that the quality of the dossiers submitted has improved a little since the publication of the 'Data Submission Manual 5: How to Complete a Technical Dossier for Registrations and PPORD Notifications' on 1 July 2008. Whereas before, one in three dossiers contained sufficient information, at present one in two new PPORD dossiers passes the technical complete-

ness criteria. Main missing information elements are related to the chemical identity and the composition of the substance.

For those dossiers where more information was requested (both PPORD and registration dossiers), the updates that were provided by the applicants were in 95% of the cases sufficient to meet the technical completeness criteria.

“IT WAS MORE THAN WORTH IT ALL“

At the end of July, Bjorn Hansen, Director of Operations at the European Chemicals Agency, will say farewell to ECHA and to an intensive ten-year-old project that already has started to reshape the chemicals world.

Hansen will return to his post as Deputy Head of the Chemicals Unit at DG Environment at the European Commission, after a year of secondment at ECHA in Helsinki. For him, it has been a feeling of “immense satisfaction” to experience the start of the operation of REACH and ECHA.

“That was one of the things that drove me to come here. I wanted to see this – until 1 June 2007 basically theoretical - machine work. It does! It of course has little problems here and there, but it actually works!” Bjorn Hansen says.

A failure turned into success

Hansen is one of the foremost experts on the history of REACH. He was involved in the creation of REACH and ECHA from the very beginning and basically designed the predecessor of REACH, the Existing Substances Regulation.

It was the political failure of this regulation that paved the way to REACH, Hansen says. “It only addressed some very specific concerns and was deemed to be too slow, bureaucratic and scientific.” The switch to the “polluter pays” principle in the 90s made a review politically necessary.

The regulation nevertheless proved that it is possible to make science-based regulatory decisions on EU level and to agree on the risks of industrial chemicals, on how to assess the risks and reduce them. IT tools for mass data collection were developed as well.

“Probably the most important thing we showed was that if you have a solid scientific basis, you can get quick regulatory decisions,” Hansen stresses.

REACH crystallized in discussions

Under the former regulation, authorities bore the burden of proof and taxpayers its cost, and lack of data was a great problem. A study by Hansen’s team showed that for 88 percent of all chemicals, basic information was lacking.

REACH was born in “very hard, direct discussions”. Ideas were discussed within the Commission, their bearing tested by consulting stakeholders and Member States. Finally, the core of REACH and its implementation crystallized.

The “polluter pays” principle was introduced into REACH by reversing the burden of proof and cost. The industry is now obliged to know its substances, to provide information and to carry out the chemical safety assessment of the substances.

An independent agency, financed by industry, the authorisation of normal industrial chemicals and the integration of risk assessment and risk management were further “huge” novelties in REACH.

Consistent decisions

Since 1 June 2008, REACH is in operation. Its implementation has to be very consistent. “There are new scientific con-

cepts where the regulation created a legislative framework but the science still has to fill it up,” Bjorn Hansen explains.

Consistency has high priority, and to answer a question, ECHA often gets together more experts than needed. It happens that even they have to discuss hard to agree on a solution.

“To explain REACH to people is much more complex than I ever thought. I had expected that after a year, everybody in ECHA would think the same way. But it will take years, given the speed that we grow, before we have a very clear collective view on the details of implementing REACH,” Hansen predicts.



The Agency’s building at Annankatu, Helsinki, has been Bjorn’s work base since last September / Photo by ECHA Communications

Industry needs clarity

Industry had a very strong lobby on REACH, and Hansen estimates that many people in the industry did not yet decide to roll up the sleeves. “However, a number of companies definitely did. It is great to see them take on the challenges, the freedom that REACH gives them.”

“They say: If I have to do this, what is in for my business, what is in it for me? This is the way REACH is designed to work, basically to see business opportunities and to protect man and environment.”

“The purest idea in REACH, really the original seed, was that REACH should create a very strict and clear framework for industry decisions. And if industry decided according to that framework, there would hardly ever need to be an intervention from outside. That is the core of the whole REACH. Everything else is built around that idea.”

"It was intended that industry should document what they have done and send it to ECHA, and generally, from the industry perspective, that should be enough." He adds that this is how the reversal of burden of proof actually was operationalised.

Enhanced competitiveness

REACH will harmonise the world chemical industry in a way that it has never been confronted with before, Hansen says.

"The EU is the world's biggest importer and exporter of chemicals. If you produce and trade a chemical, very likely you trade with the EU and have to fulfil REACH requirements. You will also see the benefits of knowing about your chemicals."

The regulation internalises health and environment aspects into the price of the product. Companies that know their chemicals will have an advantage over those who do not.

"There will be one standard across the Europe, and companies can be reassured that this will hinder unfair competition due to different standards," Bjorn Hansen underlines.

He stresses that it will be very difficult under REACH to develop a company strategy based on non-compliance.

Reactions to come

Also the green NGOs have lobbied strongly, and Bjorn Hansen estimates that they now tensely expect to see what comes out of ECHA. "We are the realisation of REACH and have not yet produced anything in terms of evaluation decision or restriction. We will get clear reactions when the authorisation process starts towards the end of this year."

Reactions are also expected from Member States, consumer and worker organisations. It will be a challenge for ECHA to balance the expectations whilst maintaining its scientific and technical integrity. "That is a very difficult balance to find. To be criticised but still be respected, that is not easy."

What will then happen to the most problematic chemicals?

"I think that those chemicals which need controlling will be controlled. It will take 20 years to get this system comprehensively up and running, and in some cases chemicals will have to leave the market. If the use of a nasty chemical is necessary, REACH gives a possibility to keep using it, but industry needs to show why it is necessary to use that chemical and not another one."

Politics and science separated

REACH introduced a separation of politics and science. "ECHA was created to make this clear separation which did not exist before. But, politics being what it is, it will not be able to resist trying to interfere in what we are doing, and that is where ECHA needs very strongly to hold up. Once we bend over for politics, then we immediately lose our scientific credibility. And that is very very hard to built up again," Hansen says.

Four key factors are necessary for the success of REACH implementation. "It needs a scientifically respected ECHA, an industry which takes its responsibility and cooperates with the agency, Member States that never lose sight of what REACH intends to do and a Commission that works efficiently, coherently and closely with ECHA."

Valuable memories

Hansen will soon leave Finland. He is happy to go back to his family and looks forward to work again with his team in the Commission. Interesting issues are waiting on his desk, and the international impacts of REACH will also occupy him in the future.

But he will not forget his colleagues in ECHA so soon. "I must say: the biggest, most pleasant surprise in the Agency is the staff! Happy, working way too hard but really motivated and moving REACH forward."

"To work and to be allowed to be the boss of so many talented, friendly, energetic people – that experience I will take home and cherish forever. It was more than worth it all when you see that."



ED Geert Dancet and Bjorn Hansen engage in conversation during the farewell party on 24 July. Photo by ECHA Communications

ECHA COMMITTEES OPEN THE DOORS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

The committees of ECHA have held their first meetings and agreed on their work procedures and organisation. Now they will take up the tasks assigned to them by REACH and head for pioneering experiences, as many things will be done for the first time ever. The Newsletter will regularly cover the developments in the committees.

MSC: Code of conduct for observers

At its June meeting, the Member State Committee agreed to invite 15 organisations to the committee meetings as observers (industry and trade organisations, consumer, worker, environmental, animal welfare and health organisations, two scientific associations and the OECD Secretariat).

According to Anna-Liisa Sundquist from ECHA, Chairman of the Member State Committee, the Committee still needs to determine how the observers can participate in its work. A code of conduct is currently being drafted by ECHA for stakeholder participation in all ECHA bodies.

The committee decided that the number of observers should be proportionate to the number of Committee members, and observers are expected to take the floor only if they wish to present relevant scientific or technical information having an impact on the work of the Committee. "We are not a political body and cannot deal with traditional position papers," Sundquist stresses.

The observers should not be "case owners" but should represent an organisation. The issue of inviting "case-owners" on a case by case basis for a specific agenda point will be discussed with the Committee separately.

The observers do not have access to closed sessions that can be organised upon request by the members.

No fear of lobbying

MSC and ECHA are committed to transparency and openness. Even lobbying does not scare Anna-Liisa Sundquist. "It is up to the members to decide whether lobbies are received, but I do not see any problems. All Committee members have signed a commitment of independence and declared their conflicts of interest. They can listen to lobbyists if they choose, but they should de-



Anna-Liisa Sundquist finds communication with stakeholders important. / Photo by ECHA Communications

cide on the basis of scientific and technical facts only," Sundquist explains and adds, "I have a lot of experience in being lobbied in my previous work, more information does not harm, but decisions have to be made on the basis of facts."

Consultation comments received

The Member State Committee, which has a conciliatory role and makes its conclusions by seeking agreement, will discuss in October the Annex XV proposals for Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC), with the aim of agreeing unanimously on identification of these substances. The proposals are under consultation on the ECHA website until 14 August.

The MSC will then review those dossiers on which comments were received. If the Committee agrees that the substances fulfil the criteria for SVHC, they will be placed on the so-called 'candidate list'. Substances on this 'candidate list' may eventually be included in the list of those subject to authorisation (Annex XIV of REACH or 'authorisation list').

The Committee will discuss also responses to comments that contained scientific facts; this will be done in co-operation with the Member State which originally made the proposal and with ECHA. The Committee's deliberations will be made public on

ECHA website unless confidential information is discussed. "But comments should in general not be confidential," Sundquist remarks.

The consultations were formalized in REACH, and the Committee now deals with the outcome for the first time. "We are doing everything the first time, and when we make decisions, they will be followed carefully", Anna-Liisa Sundquist says.

The future workload of the Committee can be estimated only after seeing how many proposals for substances of very high concern the Member States will make, how many testing proposals industry will make in their registrations and how well the industry will prepare its registration dossiers. The first draft decisions on testing proposals are expected to be on the Committee agenda next year. Next year also the first draft decisions on compliance checks of registrations are expected to be addressed in the Committee.

RAC: the first C&L consultation soon

Also the Risk Assessment Committee decided to invite observers. A public consultation on a couple of proposals for classification and labelling will start after the compliance check on the dossiers has been completed in ECHA. The Risk Assessment Committee will then appoint rapporteurs to prepare the draft opinions for the Committee.

RAC will also prepare for the first discussions on restrictions which will focus on some "test cases" that were not finalised under past legislation.

SEAC: Developing socio-economic analysis

The Committee for Socio-economic Analysis is now taking on the interesting task of developing the procedure and the content of a socio-economic analysis. A workshop will take place in October to develop further the procedures, contents and ideas for SEAC opinions; stakeholders and RAC are invited to participate. SEAC also intends to invite observers to the next meeting.

Forum: A strategy for enforcement

The Forum for Exchange of Information on Enforcement is preparing a strategy for enforcement and analyzing priorities and criteria. Some pilot projects are being developed.

A work group will present in December its report on how to enforce the pre-registration requirements. Enforcement of the pre-registration will be one of the pilot projects that the Forum plans to start. The goal is to develop common structures for the enforcement, i.e. how to do it, how to get the information.

The EU Member States decide themselves what kind of penalties are introduced for non-compliance. In general, the measures should be effective, proportionate and dissuasive. The Member States shall notify their provisions in place on penalties to the Commission by 1 December 2008.

Guidance

ECHA GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS NOW NEARLY COMPLETE

The guidance documents published on the ECHA website describe the collectively agreed ways to implement the various REACH processes in practice. They have been developed in the REACH Implementation Projects (RIPs) between 2004 and 2008, under the lead of the European Commission and are based on a broad stakeholder involvement.

By early August, the majority of the guidance documents will have been published (16 out of 19 Guidance documents). This includes recently finalised guidance on substances in articles; information requirements (IR) and Chemical Safety Assessment (CSA); Socio-economic analysis (SEA) for restriction; inclusion of substances into the List of Substances subject to Authorisation;

and priority setting for evaluation. The Guidance on Classification and Labelling based on the Globally Harmonised System (GHS); the application for an Authorisation; and Socio-economic analysis for Authorisation are still to come (late 2008 and 2009).

ECHA has taken over responsibility for the guidance, following the hand over from the Commission. This includes making accessible, correcting, amending, revising, and filling gaps in the guidance. For updating or creating new guidance, the Management Board of ECHA has endorsed a procedure which ensures the involvement of Member States and stakeholders. Among the first processes to be started are the updates of the Guidance on Substances in Articles, and the development of new Guidance on Risk Communication.

Agency Networks

ECHA HELPDESK

The ECHA Helpdesk provides support to registrants submitting data on chemicals and especially on IUCLID 5 and REACH IT. Also important is the role of ECHA in coordinating the REACH Helpdesks Network (REACH Help-Net) and in harmonising responses on REACH of national helpdesks. This network was established in February 2007 and it includes representatives of all 27 EU Member States, Norway, Iceland, the ECHA helpdesk, the Commission, observers from industry helpdesks operating at European level and Turkey as Candidate Country to the European Union.

Enterprises have access to a lot of information on REACH at the ECHA website, for example technical guidance documents, FAQ documents, several submission manuals as well as IUCLID user manuals. Following the approach that it is more effective to 'teach hungry people how to fish, rather than to serve them the fish on a plate', the ECHA Helpdesk is helping the indus-

try in finding their answers on their particular REACH obligations by 'teaching fishing in the existing pool of information'. The ECHA Helpdesk receives questions on REACH also from companies that are based outside the European Community, which have no obligations under REACH. Nevertheless these customers wish to maintain their European market, hence the ECHA Helpdesk provides them information on how they can help their EU-based importers or appointed 'only representatives' to fulfill obligations under REACH.

Currently, the ECHA Helpdesk is receiving around 250 questions per week. We are experiencing that the companies are more and more prepared and ask quite specific REACH questions. Since June, a significant share of questions is on technical issues of REACH – IT, temporary solutions for submitting data to ECHA, the practical preparation of pre-registration, inquiries, PPORD notifications and registration dossiers to be prepared in IUCLID 5.

The recently released document "Guidance on information requirements and chemical safety assessment" describes a more advanced system of use of case descriptors than currently implemented in IUCLID 5. The new categorisation is planned to be implemented in IUCLID 5.1 to be released early 2009.

A temporary user guide is now available on reporting identified uses. It explains in detail how the sections 3.5 and 3.6 of the existing IUCLID version 5.0 should be filled in. The recommendations are in accordance with the Guidance

on information requirements and chemical safety assessment, and should facilitate a smooth transition of the data from the current IUCLID 5.0 to the next IUCLID release 5.1.

For more information on IUCLID 5.0, please visit <http://ecbwbiu5.jrc.it/>

Stakeholders

ECHA INVITES STAKEHOLDERS TO THE FIRST STAKEHOLDERS' DAY

ECHA is organising its first stakeholders' day in co-operation with the European Commission on 10 October at Finlandia Hall in Helsinki. It is the first of regularly organised stakeholder events. The main objective of these events is to develop efficient channels of communication, dialogue and engagement between ECHA and its different interest groups.

The programme of the first stakeholders' day covers various topics from the implementation of REACH to the involvement of stakeholders and third countries in ECHA's work. The event will introduce some agency experts as well as guest speakers such as Mr. Leo Heezen from CEFIC, Dr. Ninja Reinike from WWF and Dr. Luc Turkenburg, representative of CEPE.

During the day the stakeholders will have a chance to share their views and ask questions on the Regulation and other ECHA activities.

Stakeholders are invited to register for the first stakeholders' day on the Agency's web page. The main target audiences are industry associations and public bodies that have a key role in the implementation of REACH. Also third countries and organisations that have a direct interest in the Regulation or are involved in ECHA's activities are invited to register. There are up to 400 seats available for this event.

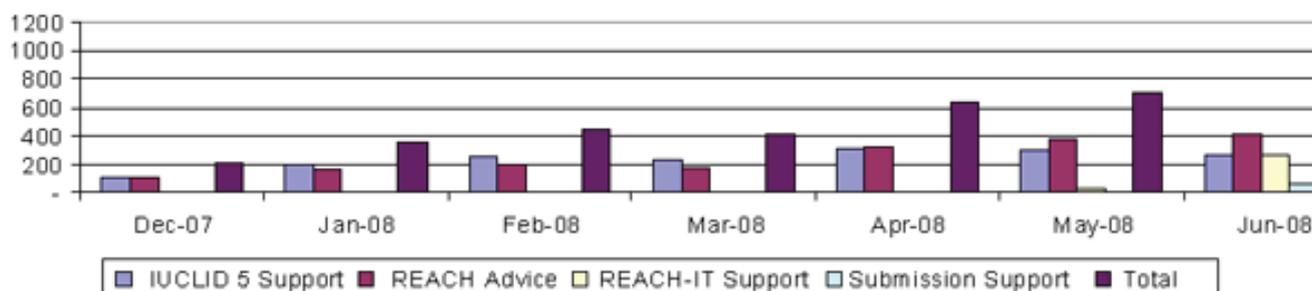
For draft programme and further information see http://echa.europa.eu/news/events_en.asp

Statistics

ECHA HELPDESK INCIDENT STATISTICS BY JUNE 2008

By 30 June 2008 there were a total 3733 questions received at the ECHA Helpdesk. Most of the incoming questions have been related with either REACH Advice or IUCLID 5 Support.

REACH Advice	1743 questions received
IUCLID 5 Support	1648 questions received
REACH-IT Support	284 questions received
Submission Support	58 questions received



"I come from a small city in Greece, Akrata, located in North Peloponesus, some 150 km west of Athens. Here in ECHA I am team leader of the document management system team and project manager of IUCLID application.

I arrived in Helsinki at the beginning of December 2007 and have lived here now for seven months. The darkness was actually not a problem, because I lived five years in Copenhagen before I came to Helsinki. Last winter it was not so hard, the Finnish colleagues called it 'the Danish winter' because it was not so white and cold. For me it was fine, I was feeling at home!

The reason why I came here was the job. It is a new agency that started recently, and it is quite motivating to work there. So I did not choose Helsinki, I chose the job.

I had never been in Finland before, and as I told my friends in Copenhagen that I would come here, nobody had good comments to make about Helsinki. But I stuck to my opinion, and when I came here in November for five days to look for a flat, I liked the city! Everything was quite well-organized. I had help in finding my apartment and found it in three days, it was quite easy to open a bank account, to have internet at home, electricity contracts. Everything ran very smoothly. I did not have any problems to come here and settle down.

The majority of the people in Helsinki speak English quite well and communication is not a problem. It is also important to be able to speak your mother tongue. I was lucky here because I have two Greek colleagues. With one of them, we even became neighbours.

Living in Helsinki is easy. It is not a big city and you can move around easily. It is relatively clean, you do not have traffic jams, there are plenty of small parks where you can enjoy sunshine whenever it is available and the public transportation is good. There are bicycle lanes where you can cycle when the weather is good.



*Giorgos Ksouris thinks that living in Helsinki is easy.
Photo by ECHA Communications*

In ECHA, my job is quite challenging, and I like my colleagues very much. We go out together; this is really important when you are in a foreign country. Like this, you can have social life almost immediately.

What I miss here are good, fresh vegetables and fruit and restaurants with long opening hours, serving food late in the evenings. But all these are minor things...

Another thing is that the airlines consider Athens to be a small capital and there are no direct flights to the city from Helsinki in winter!"