

The 19th HelpNet Steering Group meeting – 22 May 2024

1. Opening the Steering Group meeting

The 19th HelpNet Steering Group meeting, organised for the members and observers of HelpNet, took place on 22 May 2024, in Helsinki.

This document summarises the topics discussed¹ during the meeting (Annex I), the follow-up action points (Annex II) and the list of participants (Annex III).

1.1 Opening the Steering Group meeting

The Chair, Erwin ANNYS (ECHA, Head of Unit Support and Enforcement) opened the 19th Steering Group meeting and welcomed representatives of national helpdesks, observers from candidate and third countries, observers from industry and remote participants.

1.2 HelpNet 18 - follow-up of action points

The Chair presented the list of closed action points² (Annex IV) from the previous Steering Group meeting held in May 2023.

The action point concerning the written procedure on the conclusions of the Borderline Working Group (BWG) on the recovered aggregates would be closed with the discussion taking place under the agenda item 2.6 Borderline Working Group activities and next steps.

1.3 Approval of the draft agenda

The Chair introduced the draft agenda mentioning that the Borderline Working Group activities would take place in a closed session for HelpNet members only. The agenda was adopted without any comments.

Then, the Chair requested the participants to declare any conflicts of interest that they may have on any particular agenda points. No conflict of interest was raised.

In addition, HelpNet members were asked to verbally express their concerns³ (if any) on the attendance of observers on any agenda points. No objections were raised.

The Chair introduced then Mercedes VIÑAS, Director of Submissions and Interaction, who presented the Agency's new 2024-2028 strategic goals and priorities.

¹ Disclaimer: Note that the text of the BPR, CLP and REACH regulations is the only authentic legal reference and that the summaries in this document do not constitute legal advice. For further advice, contact your national helpdesk.

² The action points of the previous Steering Group meeting are available for HelpNet member and observers on the collaboration platform, in the folder: HelpNet 18 (23-25 May 2023).

³ According to the Handbook, section 1.2 Chair of the HelpNet Steering Group, the Chair considers and takes decisions on any objections from members to the participation of observers or additional experts.

1.4 ECHA Strategic Statement 2024-2028

Mercedes VIÑAS, Director of Submissions and Interaction, welcomed the participants in the room and participating remotely highlighting the great work done by the representatives of all national helpdesks reflected in the report of the Helpdesks activities recently published on ECHA website⁴.

Mercedes VIÑAS explained how looking at the chemical strategy for sustainability and the additional work brought to the Agency, the new tasks, and new expectations led to the review of ECHA's strategy which is now published⁵.

The speaker emphasized the values and the vision of the Agency, and the main strategic goals and priorities:

- Being a trusted chemicals agency, using independent expertise and robust data
- Respond to emerging challenges and changes, getting ready for new tasks
- Communicate and engage, collaborating with stakeholders and partners and strengthening public confidence
- Lead on chemical knowledge and expertise
- Invest in people and organisational excellence

She mentioned the Agency's core values - integrity, transparency, collaboration – and the commitment to further work in closed collaboration with the European Commission, Member States, stakeholders, sister agencies, to advance on the common goal of chemical safety.

The main expected outcomes of the strategy were also outlined:

- Increased number of hazard identification or risk management outputs delivered for the decision-making process under relevant regulatory areas
- Transparent, independent and high-quality opinions and decisions developed that contribute to the implementation of EU legislation and policy
- Data that is reliable, findable, accessible, interoperable, shared, secure and reusable
- Regulatory processes and IT tools streamlined and interoperable with high levels of user satisfaction and use
- Stakeholders proactively engaged, involved, and satisfied with ECHA supports, tools and services
- Use of alternative and non-animal methods increased

Last, but not least, the speaker emphasised that ECHA needs to provide tools, advice, and support to industry, with a particular focus on SMEs and their needs, in fulfilling their duties under chemical legislation. Mercedes VIÑAS concluded that delivering on the EU ambitions of chemical safety would be possible only by joining forces and resources and working together, both ECHA and National helpdesks.

⁴ <https://echa.europa.eu/about-us/partners-and-networks/helpnet/2023>

⁵ https://echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/17209/echa_strategy_2024-2028_en.pdf/936c121f-9ba0-e677-40e1-d27c0cbdbacb?t=1706600415618

2. Updates from the HelpNet Secretariat and ECHA

2.1. New observer in HelpNet – Bosnia and Herzegovina

Milana TELIĆ presented the constitutional setup of the environmental, health and chemicals management in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the role of ECHA and regional cooperation in building the helpdesk capabilities.

According to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, environmental and health policies are in the remit of the Republic of Srpska, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brčko District.

The speaker introduced the helpdesk activities⁶, the organisation and support provided to stakeholders addressing their obligations and concern on the implementation of REACH, CLP and BPR provisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the working language, information published on the website, contact details (dedicated phone number, e-mail address⁷), and allocated resources.

Since 2005, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republic of Srpska has been regulating chemicals and biocides aligned with the European regulations. The BPR, CLP and REACH helpdesk has been established within the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republic of Srpska, in the Department for Chemicals and Biocides.

In the future, the Federal Ministry of Health of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina will take over the REACH helpdesk activities while the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republic of Srpska will remain the contact for CLP and BPR helpdesk.

Milana TELIĆ concluded that becoming a HelpNet observer in April 2024 was a great honour and a reward for the work dedicated to the management of chemicals.

2.2. Outlook to the future

Erwin ANNYS, Chair of the HelpNet, gave an outlook on the future work of ECHA and the Support and Enforcement unit, in particular with focus on the support to SMEs, the work of the Borderline Working Group and its mandate, and other pieces of legislation under the ECHA mandate.

Referring to the ECHA strategy, the Chair emphasized the support given to stakeholders and SMEs who are proactively engaged and involved with ECHA support, tools and services.

In the future, ECHA would move from an Agency focused on REACH and CLP to a chemicals legislation centric Agency, focusing on different activities and being in contact with new industry sectors which have not been in the scope of the Agency before. Therefore, communications and accessibility have to improve for every single company which would be in contact with ECHA for any of the many legislations that the Agency is responsible for. The Battery Regulation and Drinking Water Directive were given as good examples.

To improve the communication in both directions, Member States were invited to bring forward any challenges that would be known at national level.

Referring to the catalogue of borderline cases between articles and substances/mixtures, the Chair explained the way of working within the expert group, stressing that only cases on which HelpNet and Forum members reached a common understanding and agreement are

⁶ <https://vladars.rs/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/MZSZ/farmacija/hemikalije/hd/Pages/default.aspx>

⁷ HelpDesk@mzsz.vladars.rs

published. In one of the cases, all national helpdesks have been asked, through a written procedure, if they agree with the BWG assessment of recovered aggregates concluding that recovered aggregates are substances/mixtures and cannot be regarded as articles.

Regarding other pieces of legislation than REACH, CLP and BPR in the mandate of the competent authorities where some national helpdesks are located, the Chair clarified that ECHA's intention is to reflect on the support⁸ given on any other matter falling within their mutual interest or mandate of the national helpdesks (e.g., providing links to ECHA website essentially for those interested authorities).

Discussion

One correspondent explained that in her country, as in many Member States, the responsibility for other pieces of legislation would be outside the organisations dealing with REACH and CLP. Therefore, questions not related to REACH and CLP are not answered, and customers might be redirected to other competent authorities.

2.3 a) ECHA preparing for new tasks - Drinking Water Directive

Panagiotis ZAROGIANNIS (ECHA) introduced the Drinking Water Directive (DWD), the main objectives of the directive, the overview of timelines since the entering into force on 12 January 2021 until end of 2026.

He highlighted how the DWD aims at assessing risks from the use of chemicals in the manufacture of drinking water contact materials, establish safe migration levels and approve conditions of use to support product certification at Member State level, and promote market and scientific harmonisation.

The speaker highlighted the support given by ECHA in relation with Article 11 of the DWD setting out the framework for minimum hygiene requirements for materials in contact with drinking water, including:

- European positive lists (EUPL) of starting substances, compositions and constituents that are authorised for use in the manufacturing materials in contact with drinking water ([Commission Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2024/367](#)).
- Risk assessment methodologies and information requirements for reviewing starting substances, compositions and constituents that could be added to the EUPL: [Commission Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2024/365](#)
- Administrative procedures for updating the EUPL: [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2024/369](#).

At the end of 2025, EU economic operators, EU-based representatives of non-EU economic operators and EU national authorities can start notifying ECHA of their intentions to propose modifications to the EUPL. From the end of 2026, they can start submitting to ECHA their applications to add new entries and to amend or remove existing entries from the EUPL.

Panagiotis ZAROGIANNIS presented the DWD business process, the types of DWD applications, the process of developing the scientific opinion, submission of physical samples to JRC⁹ and the importance of joint work in the absence of data sharing provisions in the DWD.

⁸ According with the HelpNet Handbook: 'With the consent of both ECHA and the national helpdesks, cooperation may be extended to any other matter falling within their mutual interest and mandate, including new tasks in the scope of the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability'.

⁹ Joint Research Centre - European Commission.

The final products in contact with water will be certified at national level, and new national certification bodies will be set up and start certifying products from 2027 (with some transitional provisions until 2033). See [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2024/370](#).

Finally, the speaker presented the support provided by ECHA in terms of updated website, preparation of guidance documents, setting up of the IT-based application system, IUCLID formats, planned information sessions for stakeholders.

More information about DWD, expected timelines and support to applicants on ECHA and the European Commission are available at: <https://echa.europa.eu/understanding-dwd> and [DG Environment – Drinking Water Directive](#).

Questions from potential applicants on specific upcoming submissions can be submitted to ECHA, at the functional mailbox: ECHA_DWD@echa.europa.eu.

Discussion

It was clarified that the current EUPL is a compilation of national positive lists that exist plus the positive list for plastic food contact materials from Regulation (EU) No. 10/2011, in total 2042 entries. Information was collected from several Member States, and a group of four countries - Germany France, Netherlands, Denmark and the UK - who developed their own system of approvals for drinking water conduct material (the so-called 4MS Initiative).

The speaker stressed the need of new RAC members with special competencies in this area and mentioned the expert group set up by the Commission with representatives of Member States that have been helping with DWD technical matters.

2.3 b) ECHA preparing for new tasks - Batteries Regulation

Augusto DI BASTIANO (ECHA) introduced the Batteries Regulation, a new task for ECHA in line with European Green Deal. The regulation¹⁰ aims to improve the sustainability of batteries throughout their lifecycle. This includes minimising the impact to human health and the environment from production, use and disposal of batteries.

He explained the role of ECHA under the Batteries Regulation which relates to restriction of substances in batteries in a REACH-like approach, in which a restriction is applied to substances present in batteries, used in their manufacture or in subsequent life cycle stages (e.g. recycling or disposal of waste batteries) if unacceptable risks to human health or the environment are identified.

The regulation requires also that the Commission, with ECHA's support¹¹, prepares a report on substances of concern in batteries (Article 6(5)), to be submitted to the European Parliament and Council by 31 December 2027. The report covers substances having an adverse effect on human health or the environment or hampering recycling, present in batteries or used in their manufacture and must consider appropriate follow-up measures, including restrictions.

The restriction process under the Batteries Regulation will be integrated into the existing REACH restriction process by Q4 2025. The Agency's goal is to have the key objectives achieved by the end of 2025 which include the set-up of the restriction process, the capacity building for the team dealing with the Batteries Regulation the set up and capacity building of RAC and SEAC members. In addition, restriction templates, internal procedures, the IT tools, the website, the communication plan and the external support should be finalised.

¹⁰ <https://echa.europa.eu/batteries-legislation>

¹¹ [Commission's request to ECHA](#)

The speaker also presented the timelines for the process implementation¹².

ECHA foresees cooperation with Member States that have experience, in particular in the recycling of waste batteries and with stakeholders to obtain good quality information, a key element for sound regulatory actions.

The speaker concluded highlighting that the Batteries Regulation aims to create a more sustainable, safe, and transparent battery market within the EU, to reduce the carbon emissions contributing to the green transition, to promote the recycling of substances in batteries and encouraging responsible practices from manufacturers and recyclers, with benefits for consumers.

2.4 HelpNet update

Elena BIGI (ECHA), Team Leader of the Regulatory Support Team, gave an update on the activities of the HelpNet and the HelpNet Secretariat, in particular an overview of the HelpNet audit findings and recommendations, of the collaboration between ECHA and NHDs, including the tool used.

The speaker thanked the HelpNet members and observers for their contribution to the audit interviews and outlined the audit recommendations focussing on the strengths and collaboration within the network, the main output and channels of collaboration, namely the Annual Report on 2023 helpdesks activities, the redirection of REACH and CLP questions to NHDs, the Borderline Working Group and videoconferences.

Elena BIGI also mentioned the IPA (instrument for pre-accession countries) activities, provided a brief update on the HelpEx tool and the HelpNet Handbook, and gave a preview of future events.

In 2023, the NHDs replied to nearly 45 000 BPR, CLP and REACH enquiries, while the ECHA helpdesk handled over 9 210 questions, encompassing regulatory and IT tool-related queries. In addition, the competent authorities where the BPR, CLP and REACH NHDs are located reported having replied to 5 727 enquiries, mostly related to Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), Prior Informed Consent (PIC), Waste Framework Directive (WFD).

HelpNet members and observers and ECHA continued working together in 2023, increasing their cooperation through several channels and 26 meetings overall, among which the 18th Steering Group meeting in May, the regulatory workshops in May and November, videoconferences and BWG meetings.

Looking ahead, ECHA reaffirms its commitment to reinforce collaboration with national helpdesks, stakeholders, candidate countries and SMEs with, among others, meetings, workshops and ad hoc working groups. Elena BIGI concluded that the network is a very good forum to exchange, discuss and learn from each to uphold the quality of regulatory, scientific, and technical advice across the European Union.

Discussion

It was clarified that the HelpNet Handbook will be revised in 2025, members will be consulted, but there is no expectation or obligation for the BPR, CLP and REACH NHDs to go beyond their mandate.

Action point

AP 1. With the annual revision of the HelpNet Handbook consider how to clarify the mandate of the network with respect to ECHA's new tasks.

¹² <https://echa.europa.eu/understanding-batteries-regulation>

2.5 Harmonisation of the survey of Helpdesks annual activities and SME support

Amandine JOMIER (ECHA) and Evelyne FRAUMAN (ECHA) introduced the topics to be discussed in this session. Their presentation covered two different topics, (1) the harmonisation of the annual survey and (2) the SME strategy.

On the first topic, some adjustments to the annual activity survey had been proposed and implemented, following up on last year's discussions within the HelpNet. NHDs were now asked to reflect on whether there was a need to review existing questions, since some questions had been identified as triggering issues in collecting the information (e.g., assessing the complexity of enquiries received by NHDs; identifying hot versus recurrent topics in enquiries received, calculating and comparing average response time to enquiries, etc.). NHDs were also invited to reflect on whether additional questions could be asked in the survey to foster further cooperation in the network.

On the second topic, the speakers highlighted the focus given to support to SMEs in ECHA's strategy report and in ECHA's mandate, embedded in the broader framework of the Commission's strategy to support SMEs. Initial ideas that emerged from the brainstorming of ECHA's directorate of Submissions and Interaction on this topic was introduced as a basis for the discussion. The objective was to discuss how the HelpNet could best support SMEs and share some initial ideas in that regard from NHDs - who are the first point of contact for companies with regulatory obligations.

Colleagues from ECHA facilitated the discussions gathering feedback from the participants which were reported back to the plenary at the end of the day, during the 'Conclusions of the day'.

Harmonisation of the annual survey – Summary of the discussion

NHDs confirmed that the level of complexity of an enquiry received by the helpdesks is generally not recorded. While some suggested to drop this question, others highlighted that it remained an important indicator of the workload, in addition to the numbers of received enquiries. NHDs suggested to set some criteria or guide them with examples if this information should be recorded. For instance, it was highlighted that several aspects may indicate the level of complexity of an enquiry, including a longer response time, a topic known to be particularly difficult, or the need to involve other offices or authorities to draft a reply.

NHDs reported some issues in providing information related to calculating the average response time to enquiries. Some of them do not keep track of that information. Others highlighted that depending on the channel used to receive and answer the questions, the average response time was very different (e.g., during a phone call, the reply may be given on the spot, while emails usually require several days to be processed). As a general rule, all helpdesks follow the deadlines set in the code of good administration behaviour.

Different tools have been used by NHDs to keep track of the number of questions received, read and/or answered. NHDs also replied to additional questions that did not fall under REACH/CLP/BPR and wished to be able to continue providing this information in the survey and see it reflected in the report. Although most of the NHDs do not particularly record the status of companies submitting enquiries, it was nevertheless noted that many questions came from SMEs.

Regarding hot and recurrent topics, many NHDs welcomed the proposal of keeping track of both separately. While recurrent topics referred to the most frequent topics, triggering the highest number of enquiries received during the year, hot topics referred to new or emerging topics triggering e.g., a peak of enquiry at a certain time of the year, or specific needs for wider consultation. One correspondent suggested renaming 'hot' topics by

'emerging' or 'new' topics to make it clearer.

Finally, the following elements were suggested to be added to the Annual survey:

- Remark text field at the end of the survey.
- Free text field to allow further description of projects.
- Add a question on the percentage of enquiries received from outside own country.
- Collect and record data in the report on questions received for other regulations.
- Collect information on questions related to enforcement.

SME strategy - Summary of the discussion

Some NHDs have engaged in specific projects to address SME support. Amongst these, options were being considered, e.g., looking into new ways of dealing with questions, using an approach per sector or product type instead of per substance. Different tools are also tested or envisaged when it comes to facilitating the learning of chemicals regulation: E-learning tools, basic courses, and cooperation with universities.

Participants highlighted the need to simplify the website content and navigation. The HelpNet handbooks could serve to help guide in the ECHA website. Other options mentioned included developing ad-hoc sections on specific topics (e.g. microplastics). In general, participants noted that some website pages are often used for reference, and it is important to ensure these pages are kept up to date. Participants also discussed tools that could support navigating the ECHA website, such as the formerly used navigator (update needed), some newly developed E-tool or chatbot, or the development of a simplified inventory.

The small groups also addressed engaging with SMEs to increase their awareness. For this, different actions were considered: cooperation with industry associations, support in selecting consultancies, or render the use of a chemical advisor to support industries preparing dossiers mandatory.

SMEs seem to prefer direct interactions through phone calls.

New support material could be developed in the form of videos, tutorials, facts sheets on process and process workflow. These should be developed in all EU languages.

Similarly, the IT support could be provided in all EU languages. Some NHDs requested to consider the option of voluntary training of NHDs on IT tools to enable support in national languages.

Material packages on specific topics could be developed, for example for disinfectants and approved substances.

Finally, participants discussed the organisation of seminars, specific events, webinars, and one-to-one sessions.

2.6 Borderline Working Group – activities and next steps [CLOSED SESSION]

3. Updates on ECHA activities

3.1 Communication activities

David CLIFFE (ECHA), Head of the Communications Unit, introduced the coverage from the communication perspective of the work of the ECHA's scientific committees, the ECHA CHEM database, the Forum pilot project on restricted perfluorocarboxylic acids (PFCAs), the new CLP hazard classes included in IUCLID and the new communications strategy and stakeholder approach.

In terms of coverage and external media, the PFAS restriction proposal was one of the hot

topics of 2024, with coordinated work taking place between the scientific committees of ECHA, the five Member States who proposed the restriction, and the Commission.

Another hot topic mentioned was the new hazard classes which have been included in the IUCLID software from 29 April 2024, and the related guidance documents prepared for companies.

The speaker briefly mentioned the ECHA CHEM database containing information from more than 100 000 REACH registrations and the upcoming redesigned Classification and Labelling inventory. More information was provided under in the CLP Workshop under the agenda item 3.4 Update on dissemination activities.

Another piece of work promoted by ECHA was the European Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals (EU PARC), one of the projects funded by the European Union. The project is coordinated by the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES), and is dedicated to financing scientific research to support regulatory needs and regulatory reactions. Participants were encouraged to have a closer look at the projects run under PARC, the report published in 2023¹³, and follow the webinar scheduled on 18 June 2024¹⁴.

Another topic with media coverage was that of restricted perfluorocarboxylic acids (PFCAs) and related substances in consumer products such as cosmetics. In relation with this, the Forum started a pilot project in 2023 which would be continued in 2024 and finalised at the end of 2024. This would be another area where ECHA would cooperate with Member States once the key messages have been identified.

David CLIFFE presented the new Communications strategy developed in tandem with ECHA's strategy for 2024-2028 delivering on chemical safety through science collaboration and knowledge, responding to emerging challenges, communicate and engage, the latter being a high priority for the entire organisation, but particularly for the directorate A-Submission and Interactions¹⁵.

Finally, the Member States' communicators network was mentioned, an informal network with 35 members from 20 Member States, covering many areas in their work at national level. ECHA would be looking at capacity building with the Member States, help people developing communication capacity, skills, share knowledge, and connect. He encouraged representatives to highlight this network in their authorities to ensure they were represented there.

Action point

AP 2. Provide the link to the scientific project PARC.

3.2 Activities of the ECHA Board of Appeal

Luca SCHIRMER-BOLZONELLO (ECHA), Legal Advisor in the Registry of the Board of Appeal¹⁶ (BoA) gave an overview of the role, procedures and competencies of the BoA. The BoA is assisted by a Registry, responsible for all communication between the BoA and those involved in appeal proceedings.

The BoA is an independent, impartial and collegial body within ECHA responsible for deciding on appeals lodged against certain decisions of the Agency taken under the REACH

¹³ [Key Areas of Regulatory Challenge](#)

¹⁴ Research needs for protecting human health and the environment - an EU agencies' perspective: <https://echa.europa.eu/-/research-needs-for-protecting-human-health-and-the-environment-an-eu-regulator-s-perspective>

¹⁵ <https://echa.europa.eu/about-us/who-we-are/directorates-and-units/directorate-a>

¹⁶ <https://echa.europa.eu/about-us/who-we-are/board-of-appeal/the-board-of-appeal>

Regulation and the Biocidal Products Regulation. BoA consists of three permanent members and nine alternate/additional members.

The speaker outlined two important cases appealed before the General Court and the European Court of Justice concerning vertebrate animal testing on cosmetic ingredients. He also presented two cases concerning the revocation of registration numbers following a company size verification.

The first two cases (A-009-2018 and A-010-2018), the registrant argued before the BoA that ECHA could not require studies on vertebrate animals for human health endpoints because the substances were used exclusively as ingredients in cosmetic products.

The BoA rejected both appeals. The reasoning was based on the fact that the safety of consumers who use the finished product would be taken care of under the cosmetics regulation while safety of workers who manufacture those cosmetic products and the substances contained in those products would be taken care of under other pieces of legislation, including the REACH Regulation.

The relationship between the information requirements in REACH and the marketing and testing 'bans' in the Cosmetics Regulation have been an issue for many years with several different interpretations. The findings of the BoA were later confirmed by the EU Courts.

The other case concerned the registration of two substances, in 2013 and 2014, by a company paying reduced registration fees as a small enterprise. The question in this case was what would happen if a registrant, after a company size verification and a required top-up fee, would not pay the invoice.

Between 2017 and 2020, ECHA carried out a verification of the appellant's company size ('the SME verification decision') under Article 13 of the Fee Regulation and concluded that the appellant was not entitled to pay reduced registration fees, requiring the appellant to pay top-up registration fees and an administrative charge. The appellant neither challenged the SME verification decision before the General Court, nor paid the required top-up fees. Therefore, ECHA rejected the registrations, and the appellant was no longer allowed to use the registration numbers.

The Board of Appeal held that ECHA can, in principle, abrogate (revoke, withdraw) a favourable decision based on a new fact (A-013-2021 and A-014-2021). However, this power is subject to a number of strict conditions.

3.3 Forum activities

Maciej BARANSKI (ECHA), team leader of the Harmonised Enforcement Team, gave an overview of the work done by the Forum since the last update given in 2023.

Forum agreed and published a work programme for the years 2024-2025 identifying the horizontal enforcement priorities – i.e. imports and cooperation with customs, online sales, and the integrated enforcement – and the specific enforcement priorities – i.e. regulatory risk management measures, classification and labelling, and information in the supply chain.

The speaker gave a brief update on the REF-12 project on import controls with inspections ongoing in all 27 Member States and the three EEA countries, and looking into all key duties of REACH, with a report to be published in 2025.

The REF-13 project on online sales, started in 2023, looked into restrictions under REACH, RoHS¹⁷ and POPs¹⁸, and CLP duties related to online advertising and labelling. The Forum is

¹⁷ Directive 2011/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2011 on the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment (RoHS Directive).

¹⁸ Regulation (EU) No 2019/1021 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

preparing the manual, the methods and tools in 2024, and the inspections would start in 2025.

The REF-10 project on integrated control of chemicals in products, checking restricted substances under different legislations (REACH, POPs, and RoHS and Toys Directives)¹⁹ found the overall non-compliance of 18% and non-compliance with REACH restrictions at 13%. Report was published at the end of 2023 and a workshop for stakeholders to discuss the results took place in April 2024.

In the end of 2024, the Forum will publish the reports of two projects - REF-11 project on control of quality of the Safety Data Sheets and the pilot project on POPs and REACH restrictions in cosmetics, covering such restricted substances as PFCAs.

The reports and the results of inspections made under the BPRS enforcement project were also mentioned: the BEF-2 project on biocides (project report²⁰) and BEF-3 project on Summary of Product Characteristic (SPC) and biocide labelling.

In addition, the speaker mentioned the training sessions for REACH and BPR inspectors which took place in 2023, attended by HelpNet members.

Maciej BARANSKI gave an overview of the upcoming events²¹ in 2024, ongoing review of the interlinks process where national enforcement authorities (NEAs) would be invited to enforce the ECHA decisions, and the Forum and BPRS Manual of Conclusions made available to the HelpNet members.

3.4 Update on dissemination activities

Roberta DI BLASI, Eoin BRENNAN and Anni FAST (ECHA) gave an update on the [ECHA CHEM](#) project, explaining the ambition to improve accessibility to data on chemicals, and be ready for new legislations and tasks.

The presenters explained the path from the dissemination platform to ECHA CHEM, the status of REACH registrations, what to expect in the future (classification and labelling inventory - more detail of this one in the CLP Workshop's minutes) and the regulatory lists that will be published in ECHA CHEM in the future.

The dissemination platform was launched in 2016 based on a substance centric approach, integrating and linking all public data per substance, allowing users to get a complete picture per substance. ECHA CHEM continues this approach but is being built in a modular extensible manner that will eventually allow much more to be done, in future. ECHA CHEM was launched in January 2024.

REACH registrations have been the first dataset to move to ECHA CHEM, where they are published more granularly. Each submitted registration dossier is published separately (though not linked to the related data submitter legal entity or administrative information like registration number). This means that users can immediately see the status and context of each public dossier, for example whether it represents a registration actively on the EU / EEA market (being manufactured / imported), or not active (cease manufacture, or no longer valid). A key improvement in the way dossiers are published is the transparent display, per data field, of whether the data submitter has provided information, whether information is not available because of confidentiality, or whether information was not

¹⁹ Directive 2009/48/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the safety of toys (Toys Directive).

²⁰ https://www.echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/17086/bef_2_report_en.pdf/7432b55c-f4f8-8124-0525-47d24f96143f?t=1700567655546

²¹ A workshop for stakeholders on the enforcement approach to classification of mixtures using bridging principles will take place in October 2024.

provided by the data submitter.

So far, the REACH registrations remain the only dataset in ECHA CHEM. A completely rebuilt Classification and Labelling Inventory will be released in ECHA CHEM in Q4 2024. The first set of key regulatory obligation lists, as well as the related ECHA regulatory process lists, will be also added to ECHA CHEM in late Q4 2024.

In the coming years, ECHA will gradually transfer most of the data publicly available from the current location (ECHA website > 'Search for chemicals') to ECHA CHEM. While for now the dataset moved to ECHA CHEM (REACH Registered factsheets) remains in the ECHA website, the intent is that it would be removed by the end of 2024. A similar approach will apply to the C&L Inventory and the key regulatory obligation and process lists; they will stop updating in the old location when moved to ECHA CHEM; they will remain available for a short period in the ECHA website and will then be removed.

The first set of lists foreseen to move to ECHA CHEM is as follows:

- Restriction process and Restriction list
- Identification of SVHCs and Candidate list
- Recommendations for inclusion in the Authorisation list²² as published in the Official Journal²³
- Dossier evaluation status
- Substance evaluation status
- CLH process and Harmonised classifications list
- Substances proposed as POPs and Substances subject to POPs regulation

As a new list:

- Drinking Water Directive European positive lists

To be noted that all other lists and datasets, such as Biocidal Products Regulation or PIC Regulation data, will remain in the current location on the ECHA website.

With the new datasets moving to ECHA CHEM, its landing page is foreseen to be extended to hold quick links to the regulatory list content. Each list, independent of the regulation, would follow the same basic structure: first the substance identifiers; then, for processes the latest stage reached in the process and its date; in addition, a couple of process-specific steps columns.

In a similar manner, the ECHA CHEM substance dashboard pages would also be extended with new data blocks (widgets) covering the C&L Inventory, regulatory obligations lists, and regulatory process lists. It is expected that at this point the ECHA CHEM substance dashboard pages will mostly take over from the current substance Infocards. ECHA plans to further develop the search and other functionalities of ECHA CHEM and will continue to engage with stakeholders to understand the needs from a user perspective. This may over time lead to solutions that would facilitate data consumers developing their own views of the data or creating dynamic reports.

Anni FAST stressed that ECHA's goal would be to develop a one-stop-shop for information on chemicals. Up to date information on the timeline for the main ECHA CHEM releases, their scope, maintenance and support material (support materials, webinars, frequently asked questions document) will be available on ECHA website at:

²² <https://www.echa.europa.eu/recommendations-for-inclusion-in-the-authorisation-list>

²³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>

<https://echa.europa.eu/echa-chem>.

Discussion

Participants thanked for the interesting presentation and asked for further clarifications.

Regarding the status of industry classification, in the C&L Inventory, Eoin BRENNAN clarified that the status would apply in a similar way as for registrations (active/non-active) allowing the user seeing if a classification comes from at least one active registration or a non-active one.

Regarding the XLS and XML export files available for the regulatory lists, Anni FAST clarified that export to excel would be possible in the first release and beyond that, ECHA would then carefully analyse the needs and the ways to expose the data.

There are two entry points to access the data during the current transition period:

- **Search for chemicals**²⁴ (Old platform on the ECHA website) and
- **ECHA CHEM**²⁵

For the new C&L Inventory as-submitted industry labelling will be filed in case needed but will not be shown in the Inventory (due to widespread differences and misalignments). Classification as submitted will be checked for alignment with CLP Annex I, and where aligned, a derived labelling will be calculated.

While not in the first version of the new C&L Inventory, ECHA has many future concepts including the checking of industry classifications against CLP Annex VI entries where relevant and where possible in an automated manner. ECHA does not and cannot make any claims as to the correctness of a classification, but as described above, ECHA does plan to check if each classification is aligned with Annex I and will flag them accordingly.

Only distinct classifications will be shown per substance. Distinct classifications will be ranked in a meaningful order, automatically, per substance. Ordering will take into account alignment with Annex I, maximum priority origin of the classification (REACH JS > REACH Individual > CLP notification), maximum status of the industry data (active > non-active), latest updated date and other criteria.

More information was provided in the CLP Workshop on 23 May 2024.

Closing of the HelpNet Steering Group meeting

The Chair listed the action points as the outcome of the meeting. He thanked the presenters for their contributions and interesting presentations, and all participants for the interesting discussions that had taken place. He invited participants to reply to the satisfaction survey that is to be sent after the meeting.

The 20th Steering Group meeting is planned for spring 2025.

²⁴ <https://echa.europa.eu/information-on-chemicals>

²⁵ <https://chem.echa.europa.eu/>

Annex I – Agenda

19th HelpNet Steering Group meeting

1. Opening the Steering Group meeting

- 09:30 1.1 Opening by the Chair (ECHA, Erwin ANNYS)
- 09:35 1.2 HelpNet 18 - follow-up of action points
- 09:40 1.3 Approval of the draft agenda
Declaration of conflict of interest with any of the agenda items
- 09:45 1.4 ECHA Strategy Statement 2024-2028 (ECHA, Mercedes VIÑAS)

2. Updates from the HelpNet Secretariat and ECHA

- 10:00 2.1 New observer in HelpNet – Bosnia and Herzegovina (Milana TELIĆ)
- 10:20 2.2 Outlook to the future (ECHA, Erwin ANNYS)

Coffee break (10:40-11:00)

- 11:00 2.3 ECHA preparing for new tasks: Batteries Regulation and Drinking Water Directive (ECHA, Augusto DI BASTIANO, Panagiotis ZAROGIANNIS)
- 11:40 2.4 HelpNet update (ECHA, Elena BIGI)
- 11:55 2.5 Harmonisation of the survey of Helpdesks annual activities and SME support - (ECHA, Amandine JOMIER, Evelyne FRAUMAN) **IDEAS JAM** (discussion in smaller groups)

Lunch break (12:35-13:35)

- 13:35 2.6 Borderline Working Group activities and next steps (ECHA, Evelyne FRAUMAN and Telmo VIEIRA PRAZERES) **[CLOSED SESSION]**

3. Updates on ECHA activities

- 14:00 3.1 Communication activities (ECHA, David CLIFFE)
- 14:20 3.2 Activities of the ECHA Board of Appeal (ECHA, Luca SCHIRMER-BOLZONELLO)

Coffee break (14:40-15:00)

- 15:00 3.3 Forum activities (ECHA, Maciej BARANSKI)
- 15:20 3.4 Update on ECHA CHEM (ECHA, Roberta DI BLASI, Eoin BRENNAN and Ani FAST)
- 15:45 **Conclusions of the day**

4. ECHA building tour (optional)

- 16:15 ECHA building tour (30')

18:00 Dinner at Restaurant NJK

Annex II - Action points

No	Action	Agenda item	Responsible	Status
1.	With the annual revision of the HelpNet Handbook consider how to clarify the mandate of the network with respect to ECHA's new tasks.	2.4	ECHA	Ongoing
2.	Provide the link to the scientific project Partnership for the Assessment of Risk from Chemicals (PARC): PARC's web pages Key Areas of Regulatory Challenge (KARC) Webinar on 18 June 2024: Research needs for protecting human health and the environment - an EU agencies' perspective	3.1	ECHA	Closed

Annex III – List of participants

Country	Name
Austria	Barbara WETZER
	Natalie Christine HOFMANN
Belgium	Kristof CLAES
Cyprus	Maria PALEOMILITOU (remote)
	Maria ORPHANOU (remote)
Croatia	Ivana VRHOVAC FILIPOVIC
	Irena Zorica JEŽIĆ VIDOVIĆ (remote)
	Tajana KOVAČEVIĆ
Czech Republic	Jan KOLAR
	Aneta KULHAWIKOVA
Denmark	Lone KÆRGAARD
	Maria THESTRUP JENSEN (remote)
	Anne-Katrine BONDE (remote)
Estonia	Aigi LAHE
	Anna REIMAND
	Anu MERISTE (remote)
Finland	Hannu MATTILA
	Mervi ASSMANN
	Tapio SALONEN
	Sari TUHKUNEN
France	Nathalie HAYAUD
	Stephanie COPIN
Germany	Anja HACKMANN
	Juliana Sophie REY
	Raimund WEIß
Greece	Eleni FOUFA
Hungary	András KARCZUB
	János BACSÓ
	Tamas KOVACS
Ireland	Majella COSGRAVE
	Annija LACE
	Louise PIERCE (remote)
Italy	Francesca CARFI
	Raffaella PERRONE
	Maria ALESSANDRELLI (remote)
	Silvia ALIVERNINI

	Sabrina MORO IACOPINI (remote)
	Sonia D'ILIO (remote)
Latvia	Beata VOLUJEVIČ
	Elina LAZDEKALNE
	Evija PORIŅE
	Sandra MATĪSA
Lithuania	Agnė JANONYTĖ
	Evelina BARONIENE
Luxembourg	Laurène CHOCHOIS
	Jeff ZIGRAND (remote)
Malta	Nathanael ELLUL
Netherlands	Floris GROOTHUIS
	Evan BEIJ (remote)
	Leonie FRANSEN
Norway	Cécile BLOM
	Sunniva Helene FRØYLAND
Poland	Karolina PASTUSZKO
	Piotr PACHOLSKI
Portugal	Isabel LAGINHA
	João ALEXANDRE
Romania	Nicoleta CAROLE
	Mihaela Simona DRĂGOIU
Slovak Republic	Jadža PORUBIAKOVÁ
	Anna SLIMÁKOVÁ
	Lucia MURÁNIOVÁ
Slovenia	Marta PAVLIČ ČUK
	Simona FAJAR
	Tatjana HUMAR-JURIČ
Spain	Ángela SÁNCHEZ CONDE
	David CANO GOMEZ
	Laura ZAMORA NAVAS
Sweden	Åsa ALMKVIST (remote)
	Jonas FALCK (remote)
	Leif BENGTTSSON (remote)
	Ingrid Helena GUSTAFSSON DORFH
	Jenny VIRNDARSON
	Susanna NORRTHON RISBERG

Candidate countries observers

Country	Name, surname
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Dijana DUJAKOVIĆ
	Milana TELIĆ
	Vesna LOVRIĆ
Montenegro	Jelena KOVACEVIC
	Nevena BOGAVAC
	Tatjana MUJIĆIĆ
Serbia	Bojana DJORDJEVIĆ
	Jelena GRUJIĆ
	Snezana JOKSIMOVIC
Türkiye	Bektaş KILIC
	Okan KUMCU
	Önder GÜRPINAR

Third country observers

Country	Name, surname
Switzerland	Olivier BLASER
	Markus HOFMANN (remote)

Industry observers

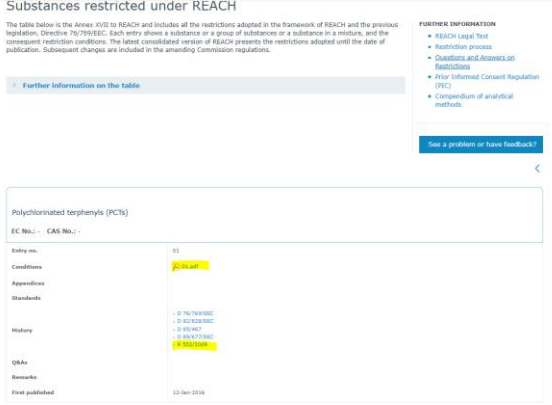
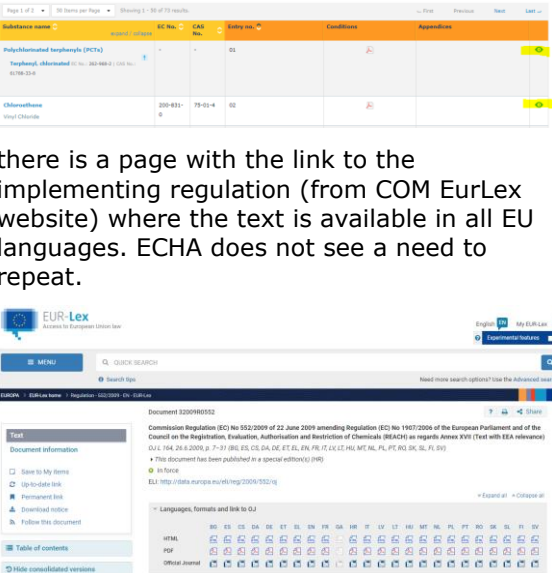
Organisation	Name, surname
Cefic	Amaya JÁNOSI
EDANA	Luminița BARBU (remote)
ORO	Kevin HOBAN

ECHA staff

Unit²⁶	Name, surname
A0	Mercedes VIÑAS
A1	David CLIFFE
	Irene LATORRE POZA
	Dobromir DOSKACHAROV
A2	Erwin ANNYS
	Amandine JOMIER
	Elena BIGI
	Evelyne FRAUMAN
	Laura CHAMAK
	Laure PAIN
	Małgorzata SZKLAREK
	Maciej BARANSKI
	Pedro ROSELLÓ VILARROIG
	Roxana BROASCA
	Viorica NAGHY
A4	Anni FAST
	Eoin BRENNAN
	Roberta DI BLASI
B3	Panagiotis ZAROGIANNIS
D2	Roberto GILIOLI (remote)
D3	Augusto DI BASTIANO
E2	Cyril JACQUET
	Fausto COMANDE
RBOA	Luca SCHIRMER-BOLZONELLO
R1	Desislava FILIPOVA

²⁶ ECHA – organisation: <https://echa.europa.eu/about-us/who-we-are/organisation>

Annex IV – Action points from the 18th HelpNet Steering Group meeting in May 2023

No	Action	Agenda item	Who	Status
1.	Annual report on questions redirected to NHDs will be provided by the end of the year with details on countries' redirection. Slides with the countries' details will be also added to the current presentation.	1.2	ECHA	Closed with the update provided 22 May 2024 under the agenda item 2.4.
2.	Consider the possibility to link the restrictions' texts in national languages on the 'Substances restricted under REACH' online list available on ECHA's webpage	1.2	ECHA	<p>Closed</p> <p>The text of the specific restriction is uploaded by ECHA in English in the restriction table for reference.</p>  <p>In addition, by clicking on the eye in the last column of the restriction table,</p>  <p>there is a page with the link to the implementing regulation (from COM EurLex website) where the text is available in all EU languages. ECHA does not see a need to repeat.</p>

3.	Consider how to harmonise the collection of data from NHDs in our annual survey/report.	1.3	ECHA	Closed with the update provided on 22 May 2024 under the agenda item 2.5.
4.	Launch a written procedure on the conclusion of the BWG for recovered aggregates and the need to review the guidance on waste and recovered substances.	1.4	ECHA	Closed.
5.	ECHA will inform the HelpNet on the result of Forum discussion on TARIC codes for REACH restrictions.	2.3	ECHA	Closed with the email sent on 8 November 2023.