

28 November 2013

Meeting minutes - ASO Communicators' Network

Time Thursday 28 November 2013, 10:00 – 12:00
Place Breydel building, European Commission, Brussels

Participants

Accredited Stakeholders: Ann Jessica Johnson (Cembureau), Ian Cummings (ECETOC), Alison Abrahams (EEB), Elisa Setien (EFCC), Sofia Minero, (EuCheMS), Andrej Porovic (NIA), Didier Leroy (CEPE).

ECHA: Lindsay Jackson (Chair), Mira Banerjee, Adam Elwan, Tiiu Bräutigam (minutes)

The Chair opened the meeting and warmly welcomed all participants to the third meeting of the network. It was the first time that the participants met face-to-face.

1. Revamping ECHA's website section for the general public – "Chemicals in our life"

ECHA gave an overview of the "Chemicals in our life" web project, targeted at the general public, and presented the mock-up of the landing page.

The participants discussed and commented the draft texts which had been sent to them in advance of the meeting.

Following points were made during the discussion:

- The target audience was defined as an educated and interested member of general public. This is to be reflected in the structure and content of the section.
- ECHA's role is to promote the safe use of chemicals. Therefore the texts should reflect the balance between risks and opportunities of chemicals.
- There should also be a balance in the presentation of natural and synthetic substances.
- The approach in the text about animal rights would benefit from being aligned with the other texts.

One participant pointed to a video "Living without chemistry" as an orientation reference for the section, giving a good general idea about the importance of chemicals in everybody's lives.

The group discussed many of the texts more in detail, giving valuable input to both the content and the structuring of the pages. The participants were invited to send further input per e-mail to ECHA until 10 December (stakeholder@echa.europa.eu).

After that the text will be finalised and translated. The whole new section will be launched on 15 March 2014 on the European Consumer Day.

2. Feedback from the SME registrant survey

ECHA presented highlights of its survey for 2013 SME registrants, focussing on how ECHA and stakeholders could support them. Industry or trade associations were found one of the most important information channels for small and medium-sized companies. Most SMEs used publications from ECHA, national authorities or industry associations to keep themselves updated. ECHA's support should be focused on practical examples, guidance documents and IT tools.

The following discussion focussed on how stakeholders and ECHA could jointly reach out and support SMEs. The participants highlighted the need to know SMEs' realities and proposed ECHA to do study visits to small companies. SMEs had several challenges, as the lack of resources and staff, difficult economic situation or costs of hiring consultants. It was highlighted that many SMEs cannot afford to be members of national industry associations and therefore are not directly reachable through their channels. For many small companies, the 2018 registration deadline was still too far away to start any preparations. The national helpdesks were considered to have an important role in helping the companies in their own languages.

3. Sharing communications plans for 2014

ECHA presented its plans for communication activities for 2014, including its present and new channels and target groups. Some joint projects with stakeholders were presented as examples for future cooperation. ECHA also mentioned about its plans on social media and videos for 2014, asking the other participants about their best practices.

The participants gave feedback to ECHA on further improving the communication channels. Some highlighted the need for a more targeted system to automatically monitor ECHA's news on specific substances, using RSS feed, Google alerts or similar instruments. There was also an interest to receive more news on CLP and PIC. Distributors were identified as one additional target group for joint communication.

The group watched a video from Cembureau as an example for a corporate video and exchanged views on its production.

ECHA mentioned that its newsletter could be used for stakeholders' guest columns or interviews. Some participants expressed their interest in this and would contact ECHA for further information.

4. Next meeting

ECHA asked the participants about their suggestions for further meetings. Most saw a value in meeting face-to-face once a year in Brussels. This could be linked with other ECHA events taking place in Brussels. This could be complemented by one or more teleconference meetings. May and December were the busiest months for most stakeholders so the meetings should preferably take place during other months. ECHA would come back to the participants with proposals for 2014 meetings.

5. AOB

No other topics were raised.

6. Closing of the meeting

The Chair thanked all the participants for their attendance and closed the meeting.