

24 April 2013

Platform for NGO-ECHA discussions

Meeting note

Time: Wednesday 24/04/2013, 16:00 – 18:00 Helsinki Time (EEST, GMT+3)

Place: ECHA Conference Centre

1. Opening

The chair (YLÄ-MONONEN Leena) introduced the themes of the meeting: The ECHA website and dissemination.

2. Key findings of the 2012 website user survey

The first phase of the project to renew ECHA's website in 2010 consisted of a customer insight research with interviews of different stakeholder groups to gain insight into the needs of ECHA's target audiences. The main objective was to develop a website that was accessible and user-friendly to all the different audience groups.

A year after the launch of the new website, ECHA conducted a web survey in November 2011. The survey had 209 respondents, the majority of which were industry representatives. It was noted that only two of the respondents represented NGOs. Most frequent comments in the survey included easier access to guidance documents and improvement of search results. The overall satisfaction rating with the website was very good. Based on the feedback, several improvements have already been implemented, for example streamlining the message appearing when content is not fully translated, improving the metadata of documents and therefore the search engine's results as well as simplifying the access to Guidance.

The key findings of the survey are detailed in Annex II.

Key points raised by NGOs

Some concerns were raised about the low level of public interest representatives in the respondents of the survey. NGO participants felt that broader feedback from non-industry users would be helpful in future surveys to understand whether the website serves its purpose also for their information needs. They also proposed to revise the methodology of the survey to allow for more respondents from the non-industry audiences by for example using focus groups.

3. Feedback from NGOs about the ECHA website

Chemicals in our Life web section

JACKSON Lindsay introduced the scope of the project for working together with the NGOs

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in revamping the ECHA website. She explained that the work, aimed only to the Chemicals in our life section, should start with rethinking the titles of the relevant sub-pages before beginning to produce content for them. It was also noted that the section title (Chemicals in our life) could be changed but it would need to remain brief.

The participants agreed that the section should provide a good base of information on chemicals and that the pages should raise awareness of the risks of chemicals for consumers, for example on the risks of biocides. It should also serve as a hub for providing further information about chemicals both within the different sections of the ECHA website and other relevant external sites. NGO participants also highlighted the importance of the section in encouraging consumers and workers to access their right to know about the chemicals in the products they buy or work with.

One of the main challenges is to tailor the information ECHA has on chemicals for consumers. For this purpose it is important that the information available in this section is written in a clear and easily accessible language.

Substitution on the ECHA website

Substitution is an example of a topic which could be included in several places on the ECHA website depending on whether the subject is addressed from an industry, consumer or worker perspective. These pages/places should be interlinked and include references to the pages of substances of very high concern (SVHC) for more in-depth information. NGO participants highlighted the importance of linking substitution also to the [SubsPort](#) website.

Workers' pages

The importance of having a dedicated page for workers on the ECHA website with links to external resources for workers and the EU-OSHA website was also raised. Based on initial discussion, the page could be located in the Chemicals in our Life section and included with the rest of the new content.

Next steps

NGO participants agreed to first discuss among themselves the main topics they would like to propose for the Chemicals in our lives section, and to send their proposal to ECHA by 6 May. ECHA will take this feedback in its discussions with the Communicators' network¹ on 13 May.

The following suggestions for the launch date of the new Chemicals in our Life section were proposed:

- Consumers' Day – 15 March 2014

¹ Meeting of Communications contacts from ECHA's Accredited Stakeholder Organisations (ASOs) All ASOs can nominate a contact person for the network by adding a press contact in the [ASO information update web-form](#).

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- World Health Day – 7 April 2014
- In the context of the European Year of Citizens (Q4 2013)

NGO participants were invited to propose other potential events that could be relevant for the launch of the new pages.

Presentation and discussion of the dissemination portal survey results

The Registration Directorate presented the initial findings of the stakeholders' engagement study on ECHA's dissemination. As the amount of data available on the ECHA website has increased drastically (information on registered substances, the Classification and Labelling Inventory, Candidate List, Authorisation list, Testing Proposals, Evaluation decisions, etc.), input from stakeholders is crucial in meeting ECHA's strategic objective of enhancing the dissemination website.

The study consisted of an online survey with 380 responses received (14 responses from NGOs) and 16 interviews with 20 stakeholders. He explained that more NGOs were interviewed than industry representatives to balance the study sample (majority of the online survey responses came from industry). The study results were received in the end of March and the analysis of open field comments is on-going. The study results are to be presented to the advisory group for dissemination and ECHA's Management Board in July. ECHA aims to go live with the first phase of the new integrated approach where users can search via a single point of access all the different databases (sources of information on chemicals and on-going regulatory processes) in 2015.

Some of the features of the portal have already been improved such as the filtering of NONS substances, improving visibility of confidentiality claims, wild card searching and general improvements to the display of data.

NGO participants expressed their interest in getting access to Chemical Safety Reports (CSR) through the ECHA website. MUSSET Christel explained that ECHA is looking into the strategy on how to make more information stemming from the CSR available on its website. One possible way forward is to re-structure the CSR, to make it fully part of IUCLID without relying on a text document as it is now. If this can be achieved, it would facilitate increasing the level of information published. However, this implies significant resource requirements as changes would need to be made also to ECHA's IT-tools. It is also to be assessed whether the structured CSR would really bring the expected benefit, i.e. make the CSA information more understandable and easier to access for subsequent regulatory processes, such as evaluation, as well as facilitate dossier updates for registrants in the long run. She explained that ECHA is working on a strategy to implement these changes and by end of 2013 a more comprehensive plan should be established. Stakeholders will be informed as soon as the planning work is completed.

Agenda setting

Participants agreed that the topic of the next meeting is substitution in the context of its presentation on the ECHA website but also in a wider context. The scope and other specific issues to be covered in the next meeting will be established by email.

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The next meeting was proposed to take place during the Member State Committee meeting which is tentatively scheduled for 23-27 September.

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Annex I – Meeting Agenda

Second meeting between NGO representatives and ECHA

Meeting topic: ECHA Website

Time & Date: Wednesday 24 April 2013, 16:00 – 18:00 Helsinki Time

Location: Room K324

- 16:00 – 16:05** **Opening of the meeting**
- 16:05 – 16:35** **Key findings of the 2012 website user survey**
- Summary of results
 - Key areas for development and future priorities for ECHA
- 16:35 – 17:30** **Feedback from NGOs about the ECHA website**
- Chemicals in our life section
 - Workers pages
 - Substitution on the ECHA website
 - Other areas of interest
- 17:30 – 17:50** **Presentation and discussion of the dissemination portal survey results**
- Summary of results
 - Next steps
- 17:50 – 18:00** **Agenda setting**
- Next steps for developing the ECHA website
 - Tentative timing and topic of the next meeting