

ECHA/PR/08/01/en

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Committee for Risk Assessment started to lay bases for ECHA's scientific opinions

The Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC) met in Helsinki for the first time 29 – 31 January. This meeting initiated the work towards assessing the risks of chemicals and their appropriate risk management measures. The Committee discussed its operating rules and reached an agreement on most provisions. It also agreed on the way of processing dossiers for which RAC opinions would be sought.

ECHA's Executive Director, Geert Dancet, said in his opening statement: *"The Agency relies heavily on the Committee members' expertise and efforts to produce its opinions. The combined expertise now available will form a solid base to carry out the tasks ahead of us, and provide the scientific grounds on which the Commission can take decisions within the strict deadlines imposed by the Regulation."*

The Committee for Risk Assessment plays a vital role in assessing the risk to human health and/or the environment arising from the uses of substances for which authorisation is being sought. It also evaluates whether the restrictions proposed by a Member State for a substance are appropriate. In addition, RAC evaluates proposals for harmonised classification and labelling of substances as carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for reproduction, or as respiratory sensitizers.

The Committee for Risk Assessment consists at this stage of 37 members; most of the Member States have nominated one or two members and the Management Board has appointed them on 17 December 2007 for a 3-year term. A list of the current RAC members is available on the website of the Agency. A link to the relevant page is available below.

The Agency chairs the meetings of the Committee for Risk Assessment.

A thorough discussion on the Committee's operating rules resulted in an agreement on nearly all aspects. The rules will safeguard transparency of the RAC's operations while maintaining its independence and ensuring confidentiality of data. The rules cover also the participation of observers to the meetings. The rules will come into effect after the ECHA Management Board has formally adopted them.

The functioning of the Committee was another main topic for discussion. The meeting explored the most efficient ways for processing the dossiers on which the opinion of the Committee would be sought. Relations with similar scientific committees within the EU, such as EFSA¹ and EMEA² were also addressed, and will be developed with a view to avoid duplication of work.

The Committee on Risk Assessment is foreseen to meet five times in 2008. The next meetings are scheduled for March, July, September and November.

Other ECHA Bodies

The Forum on enforcement started operating already in 2007. The Member State Committee and the Committee for Socio-Economic Analysis will have first meetings in February and April, respectively.

Links:

General information on the ECHA Committees

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

Members of the Committee for Risk Assessment

http://echa.europa.eu/about/organisation/committees/riskassessment_en.html

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¹ European Food Safety Authority

² European Medicines Agency