

ECHA's Transparency Approach – report on actions for 2021-2022

69th Meeting of the Management Board 30 March 2023

Proposed action

The Management Board (MB) is invited to:

1. agree to the proposal to consider, in the future, the actions to enhance transparency as part of the annual and multiannual work programming and regular reporting cycles;
2. take note of the report of the actions undertaken in 2021-2022 to improve transparency of the Agency's work;
3. take note of an update on ECHA's planned work in the area of Data Availability.

Background

Transparency is one of ECHA's current values. As a practical reflection of this, linked to [ECHA's Approach to Transparency](#), the Agency has put in place consecutive two-yearly action plans to improve its transparency.

For 2021-2022 two main areas for continual improvement were identified¹:

1. Further developing the dissemination of information on chemicals;
2. Open communication and participatory decision making.

The efforts put into implementing improvement in these two areas and their results are presented in Annex 1.

Rationale

For the future, the secretariat proposes to incorporate actions related to transparency improvements in the annual and multiannual work programming and regular reporting. This would include discontinuing the practice of separate two-yearly action plans and reports. The rationale is to avoid the proliferation of different self-standing action plans and separate reporting streams.

During 2023, the Commission is expected to put forward legislative proposals under its Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability (CSS), which will provide steer for ECHA's transparency work. These include:

- the ECHA basic regulation (including the core transparency requirements),
- the "data regulation", (potentially extending ECHA's role in the overall transparency on chemical regulatory work) and

¹ See [MB/65/2020 final](#)

- legislative proposals that reattribute several new tasks to the Agency, including several with their own transparency requirements.

It is therefore foreseen that over the coming years, ECHA will focus on implementing the changes stemming from the CSS revisions, including applying its long-standing transparency approaches to further tasks and processes. Hence, ECHA's approach to transparency and these actions will be considered for the future ECHA strategy and the annual and multiannual work programmes implementing it.

Continuous improvement on data availability

ECHA is in the process of rebuilding its Dissemination platform into a new Data availability system. While this is an independent activity from the above-mentioned legislative proposals under the CSS, this solution is being designed with the future in mind, making it ready to onboard data from new tasks allocated to the Agency, as well as introducing the core features that allow its expansion into an EU Common Data Platform on Chemicals when this is agreed. The MB is invited to take note of the Agency's current plans in terms of its Data Availability activity for the upcoming years (see Annex 2). Any work currently done or planned already takes into account that new requirements may arise stemming from legislative changes and should be able to plug into the solutions currently developed.

Attachments:

- Annex 1: Report on transparency improvements during 2021-2022

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Annex 1 - Report on transparency improvements during 2021-2022

1) Further developing the dissemination of information on chemicals

- While new developments of ECHA's Dissemination platform were put on hold in 2021 due to the technological 'end of life' of the current system, and focus shifted towards the design of a new system, a number of planned improvements nevertheless took place in the past two years:
 - In September 2021, ECHA launched the first version of the public SCIP database under the revised Waste Framework Directive. The database was improved in subsequent releases by introducing further search functionalities. By the end of 2022, it made available information from over 9 million Article notifications.
 - In November 2022, ECHA integrated the data from the PIC Regulation with the rest of the Dissemination platform, allowing users to easily see which substances of interest are covered under this regulation, while exploring the information ECHA makes available on chemicals.
 - Other improvements to ECHA's dissemination activities included increasing the visibility of the most notified classification for each substance in the C&L inventory, enabling bulk download of the full list of REACH registered substances and integration of the Recommendations for inclusion in the Authorisation List into the Dissemination platform.
 - In parallel, the Public Activities Coordination Tool (PACT) continued to offer companies and other stakeholders an overview of substances for which regulatory processes are ongoing. In 2021, the assessment of regulatory needs reports were integrated into PACT, providing an advance notice to companies on which substances are on the radar of authorities, and which regulatory actions are under consideration for those, before any formal risk management processes are initiated.
- During 2022, ECHA surveyed and interviewed more than 1 500 stakeholders to gather their requirements for a new Data availability system to replace the current Dissemination platform. Stability of the platform was raised as a significant concern of the respondents, but they also highlighted the need for better navigation and search functionality. At the same time, spontaneous positive feedback was received, and when asked about their reliance on the Dissemination platform, over 80% of respondents indicated to partially or fully rely on it for their tasks. As ECHA moves forward with the redesign and upgrade, the plan is to continue gathering feedback from stakeholders in the years to come. For further information, please refer to Annex 2.
- In 2021 the European Union Chemicals Legislation Finder (EUCLEF) expanded its scope with 16 additional legislations, giving now an overview of 51 pieces of EU legislation on chemicals and completing the scope foreseen by the Contribution Agreement with the EU Commission. The user friendliness of the web pages and the finder's visibility have been further improved in 2022, based on the feedback from the strategic assessment carried out in 2021. The visits to EUCLEF have tripled since its launch in 2020, with over 300 000 yearly page views taking place in 2022.

- During 2022, over 600 new substances have been added to the REACH study results – a publicly available collection of non-confidential substance data in IUCLID format, extracted from REACH registrations submitted to ECHA. The data contains results from studies related to physical-chemical properties, environmental fate and pathways, and ecotoxicology and toxicological information.
- In April 2022, ECHA made previously unpublished data on 19 chemicals, tested to develop medicines, publicly available as IUCLID datasets. The data were the first provided to ECHA by the European pharmaceutical industry within an ongoing voluntary data reusability project, and the information can be used to develop predictive computational testing models and promote alternative test methods to replace animal studies. Additionally, in January 2023, ECHA published further IUCLID structured datasets for 348 approved pharmaceuticals, with results from non-clinical animal studies and human information. These datasets were built by extracting animal and human data from files provided by the United States' Food and Drug Administration. The above-mentioned initiatives will continue in 2023 and it is foreseen that more than 530 datasets on pharmaceuticals will be available for download by the end of the year. ECHA will also explore further opportunities to make information on chemicals from different sources publicly available in the IUCLID format.
- Under the European Commission's Chemical Strategy for Sustainability, ECHA co-led a subgroup with the Commission's Directorate-General Environment to develop a draft implementation plan for a new EU common data platform on chemicals. The idea is to create access to more comprehensive data and information on chemicals held by EU agencies and the European Commission as part of their tasks. This will ease the sharing, access and dissemination of data from ECHA, the European Medicines Agency (EMA), European Environment Agency (EEA), the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and will also support the needs of regulatory authorities, companies, academia and the public. The Commission is expected to make a legislative proposal for the creation of this Platform in 2023.

2) Open communication and participatory decision making

- Transparency on how the Agency reaches its decisions and opinions continued to be ensured. ECHA's **Committees** continued to work in full transparency, with the option for stakeholders to follow its meetings as **observers**, also during the continued COVID-19 pandemic as ECHA worked in a hybrid setting, with a total of 650 virtual meetings and around 45 000 participants in 2021. In 2022, the Enforcement Forum agreed that its future advice on enforceability of restriction proposals will be made public.

- **Digital and Media Outreach**
 - ECHA actively publicised all relevant decisions, opinions and actions of the Agency to its broad media network and stakeholder audience via press releases, news items and the ECHA Weekly Newsletter.
 - ECHA's website, as its global entry point, saw 13 million visits annually, while ECHA also grew its presence on social media channels and expanded the reach of its media coverage. In May 2022, ECHA collaborated with four ENVI sister agencies - ECDC, EEA, EFSA and EMA - to launch a joint Instagram channel called 'One Health One Environment', which covers topics related to health and the environment.
 - Since 2021, ECHA is producing regular podcasts, the newest addition to its communication tools, aimed at explaining complex scientific topics to wider audiences and giving more background to the opinions provided in the committees.

- **Stakeholder Outreach**
 - Communications cooperation was continued with Member States between 2021-2022 by running joint awareness raising campaigns aimed at citizens, e.g. on the tattoo ink restriction or poisoning accidents (UFI codes).
 - ECHA also organised its Safer Chemicals stakeholder conference as a full-scale online event, to increase awareness of regulatory developments and what action the EU is taking, which attracted more than 2000 participants from the EU and third countries around the globe.
 - With the launch of a website for the Accelerating the Pace of Chemical Risk Assessment (APCRA)² in May 2022, ECHA's work on develop new approach methodologies (NAMs) in this area, alongside other governmental entities, was further publicised.
 - The collection, review and publication of annual declarations of interest of all contributors, the maintenance of a public agenda of all ECHA Directors on the ECHA website (meetings with external stakeholders) as well as publication of the outcome of post-employment decisions regarding senior management on the ECHA website ensured ECHA's continued commitment to transparency and independence.

² <https://apcra.net>