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**ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE  
JOINT MEETING OF THE CHEMICALS COMMITTEE AND  
THE WORKING PARTY ON CHEMICALS, PESTICIDES AND BIOTECHNOLOGY**

**THE COOPERATIVE WORK ON EXISTING CHEMICALS AT OECD AFTER 2010**

**43rd Joint Meeting of the Chemicals Committee and the Working Party on Chemicals, Pesticides and Biotechnology**

**OECD Headquarters, 2 rue André Pascal, 75775 Paris Cedex 16, France**

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This document summarises the achievements of the OECD Existing Chemicals Programme of the last 20 years and outlines proposals to plan the future cooperation to investigate existing chemicals in OECD.

***Action required:***

***The Joint Meeting is invited to  
(i) discuss the proposals in this document, and to  
(ii) chose among the options outlined in paragraphs 11-18, amended as  
appropriate.***

## THE COOPERATIVE WORK ON EXISTING CHEMICALS AT OECD AFTER 2010

### Background

1. The OECD work on existing chemicals started with the work leading up to the 1987 Council Decision-Recommendation on the Systematic Investigation of Existing Chemicals [[http://webdomino1.oecd.org/horizontal/oecdacts.nsf/linkto/C\(87\)90](http://webdomino1.oecd.org/horizontal/oecdacts.nsf/linkto/C(87)90)]. As member countries established their national chemical review programmes, the OECD activities on existing chemicals gained momentum with the 1990 Council Decision-Recommendation on the Co-operative Investigation and Risk Reduction of Existing Chemicals [[http://webdomino1.oecd.org/horizontal/oecdacts.nsf/linkto/C\(90\)163](http://webdomino1.oecd.org/horizontal/oecdacts.nsf/linkto/C(90)163)] and the start of the HPV Chemicals Programme. Member countries committed themselves to work together in OECD and to share the burden in cooperatively investigating High Production Volume Chemicals using an agreed data set.

2. In light of the desire to significantly increase the output of the programme and to make best use of the various industry initiatives announced at the end of the 1990s, a major refocusing was agreed by the Joint Meeting in 1998.

3. By 2004, approximately 500 chemicals had been assessed in OECD. After a positive review of the refocused programme, member countries agreed to deal with an additional 1000 chemicals in the HPV Chemicals Programme between 2005 and 2010. As of June 2008, 386 chemicals of these 1000 additional chemicals had been assessed and information gathering and review was on-going in industry and Sponsor countries for another 426 chemicals. The goal set in 2004 therefore seems to remain achievable.

4. The programme has worked well over almost 20 years. Among its achievements, the following can be highlighted:

- Member countries agreed upon a *Screening Information Data Set* (SIDS), considered to be the minimum set of data upon which to base an initial hazard assessment, and use it accordingly.
- Member countries have agreed upon and use a system of sharing the burden among themselves.
- The *Manual for Investigation of HPV Chemicals* outlines international agreements on how to write and document an initial hazard assessment.
- The *OECD HPV List*, which contains all chemicals produced or imported in quantities above 1000 tonnes per year in at least one member country, is updated regularly.
- Internationally agreed conclusions on the hazards and recommendations for further work have been published for almost 900 chemicals. These conclusions and recommendations are used by member countries for decision making.

- Final assessment reports are available via UNEP Chemicals [<http://www.chem.unep.ch/irptc/sids/OECD/SIDS/sidspub.html>], thereby meeting the recommendation from UNCED 1992 regarding “information exchange of toxic chemicals and chemical risks...”.
- The cooperation between member countries and with industry has intensified over the years, building a harmonised way of working and a basis for solid trust among all the stakeholders.
- Applying the principle of *learning by doing*, the programme has remained flexible and has evolved continuously to meet the needs of member countries and other stakeholders.

5. Today the HPV Chemicals Programme is run by experts from member countries, industry and NGOs and produces high quality products. The work to assess the remaining 400 chemicals will continue for the next two to three years, and by the end of 2010 the goals which were set by member countries in 2004 will probably be met. To avoid any interruption in activities at the end of 2010, it is necessary to start planning for the activities in OECD on the cooperative investigation of existing chemicals after 2010.

#### **Future cooperation to investigate existing chemicals**

6. Most countries are now running national programmes or taking part in regional programmes to assess the hazards and risks of existing chemicals, and many countries have increased their efforts to assess chemicals [see, for example, ENV/JM(2007)6, ENV/JM(2008)5]. The opportunities for *sharing the burden*, avoiding double work and optimising the output and the use of limited resources are therefore also increasing.

7. Furthermore OECD governments have not only committed to work together in the OECD through a Council Decision, but they have also committed to chemical safety goals at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2005 and in the context of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). The cooperation at OECD to assess the hazards of chemicals helps member countries to meet these commitments as well.

8. As described above, with the HPV Chemicals Programme, OECD member countries have built a programme which has gained a high level of confidence and credibility, both with governments as well as other stakeholders. This should be kept in mind when discussing the best way to continue in the future to investigate cooperatively the hazards of industrial chemicals. It is mandatory that member countries and industry benefit directly from the programme, i.e. that the value received from the programme exceeds the workload necessary to participate in the programme. The products from the OECD programme have to continue to be able to be used directly by member countries and other stakeholders for priority setting, classification and labelling as well as risk assessment or risk management.

9. Given that governments and industry may not have the resources to continue to work together on existing chemicals at OECD in the same way as they have for the last two decades, there may be a need to realign more deeply the current HPV Chemicals Programme or even to design a different way of cooperation in OECD.

10. Some preliminary suggestions to use as a basis for discussing the future programme are outlined below.

### ***1. Realignment of on-going work***

11. The future programme could be built upon the current HPV Chemicals Programme and be adjusted according to the needs of member countries. The goal of this programme would be to continue assessing the remaining HPV chemicals as well as other non-HPV chemicals (especially medium production volume chemicals or MPVs). Work for adjustments has already started based on the decisions taken at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Joint Meeting to more systematically assess non-HPV chemicals, to produce targeted assessments and to investigate the use of priority setting tools to set aside chemicals [see ENV/JM(2008)6].

12. The activities under such an evolving programme could focus on the improved or more effective use of tools developed at OECD like eChemPortal or the QSAR Application Toolbox.

13. The biggest challenge for such a programme would be to find new sources for draft assessments. Indeed, the ICCA initiative to prepare draft hazard assessments for 1000 chemicals will come to an end by 2010. For example, assessments elaborated in national/regional programmes could be submitted to the OECD Programme to share the assessment work with other countries and internationalise the assessments. It will need to be taken into account that these assessments represent different levels of analysis and are elaborated for different purposes (e.g. priority setting, classification and labelling, risk assessment). In addition, building upon the trust established over the last decades among member countries and with industry at SIAM, the review procedure at OECD for assessments elaborated in national/regional programmes could be adjusted.

14. The Task Force on Existing Chemicals, in cooperation with SIAM could be charged with elaborating such a realigned programme and identifying for which (types of) chemicals member countries and other stakeholders are ready to make commitments for assessments in the future programme.

### ***2. Design of a new programme***

15. Given the challenge of getting enough submissions of draft assessments to run a programme similar to the current HPV Chemicals Programme, it might be necessary to design a new programme. This would consist in a critical review of the current HPV Chemicals Programme in view of major changes, starting with the needs of member countries and building a new programme which better fulfils those needs. The following questions could be addressed when discussing how to cooperate in investigating existing chemicals in the future:

- What kind of outputs should such a programme produce?
- Is a/another data set needed?
- Is a systematic cooperative assessment for each chemical necessary, or could a programme be built on the principle of mutual acceptance at OECD of the outputs of national/regional assessment programmes?
- How can integrated approaches to testing and assessment be better applied in the programme? (see Annex)

16. Recently agreed changes to the current HPV Chemicals Programme [see ENV/JM(2008)6], like the elaboration of targeted assessments or using priority setting tools to set aside chemicals based on information indicating a low hazard profile, would be taken into account during the discussions.

Furthermore, the principle of *learning by doing* could be applied during the process. As a first step to develop such a new programme, an *ad hoc* expert meeting could be called to discuss the needs and develop a plan. The mandate of this meeting would be to:

- identify the needs of member countries;
- identify the work that could be done cooperatively at OECD to fulfil those needs; and
- elaborate a plan to build the corresponding programme.

17. A brief survey on the needs of member countries, how future OECD work could help countries to fulfil their national needs, and the work that would be needed to develop a new programme addressing these needs could be sent out to member countries and stakeholders shortly after the 43<sup>rd</sup> Joint Meeting. The *ad hoc* expert group could then meet in March 2009 to review the responses to the survey, elaborate a plan to move forward and report back to the Joint Meeting in June 2009.

### ***3. Combination of 1 and 2***

18. A third way forward could be to combine the suggestions outlined in 1 and 2 above. For example it could be imagined that a programme built on the current HPV Chemicals Programme could deal with high priority chemicals, while a new programme would deal with a larger number of other chemicals. Similarly to the way forward described under option 2 above, an *ad hoc* expert meeting could be called to develop a plan, based on the results of a short survey.

**Annex: Further thoughts on Integrated Approaches to Testing and Assessment (IATA)**

*Note: this annex provides some further ideas on how integrated approaches to testing could be better applied in a future Existing Chemicals Programme. They are illustrative and are not meant to be firm proposals to the Joint Meeting.*

There is a global movement toward the concept of integrated approaches to testing and assessment or “Integrated Testing Strategies”. This is evidenced by recent publications in Europe (e.g. RIVM, 2007: Selected Integrated Testing Strategies (ITS) for the Risk Assessment of Chemicals) and the United States (National Research Council, 2007: Toxicity Testing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Vision and Strategy) and by research and assessment programmes to develop data and information for implementing these strategies (e.g., the European Commission’s OSIRIS project and the U.S. EPA’s Computational Toxicology Program). Furthermore the outcome of the OECD workshop on integrated approaches to testing and assessment held in December 2007, in Washington, DC, hosted by the United States has shown the interest of member countries to become more active in this topic. [see Workshop on Integrated Approaches to Testing and Assessment, Series on testing and Assessment No 88, ENV/JM/MONO(2008)10, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/45/52/40705314.pdf> ]

The OECD Existing Chemicals Programme already applies many integrated approaches to testing and assessment and this activity is listed among the tasks to be overseen in the proposed Terms of Reference for the Task Force on Hazard Assessment [see ENV/JM(2008)34]. Nevertheless, the Existing Chemicals Programme could further evolve to become the forum where this global movement towards integrated approaches to testing and assessment be reviewed, discussed and implemented into chemical assessments. The OECD programme could become the “incubator” for evaluation of information gathered within a IATA context. In other words, OECD’s “learning by doing” concept could be applied to the evaluation of data and information gathered through integrated approaches to testing and assessment. This would require a move away from the “required endpoints” approach, to a more flexible and probably tiered or targeted assessment framework.