



# Safe use of chemicals? Europe continues to break new ground.

## Safety of Chemicals

Cefic and its members continuously strive to better understand environmental and human health effects and ensure the safety of products and processes through Responsible Care. One of the main responsibilities of Cefic is to contribute to the safe use of chemical substances in compliance with global, EU and national rules.

The EU Regulation on the Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals entered into force in June 2007 and is widely regarded as the most advanced system worldwide to regulate the safe use of chemical substances.

Cefic has been intensely engaged in the establishment of REACH and remains deeply involved in supporting an efficient and successful implementation. As a constructive partner in environmental and health issues, Cefic continues to advocate the need for a consistent and integrated approach and a solid scientific basis for policy making.

### “Smart legislation” encouraging

The European Commission’s embracing of “smart” legislation is encouraging in this respect, but multiple inconsistencies and contradictions remain in the EU’s regulatory system. Too many pieces of European legislation on chemicals do still exist that are not in line with the REACH approach. The Directive on the Restriction of the use of certain Hazardous Substances (RoHS) is a case in point. The directive suggests a methodology for substance restrictions which does not contain a clear reference to REACH and therefore does not consider sound science or risk assessments. This will lead to a duplication of criteria, requirements and procedures.

These inconsistencies and contradictions undermine the effective of regulation of risk and they place an unnecessary burden on industry.

REACH requires industry to assess and ensure safe use by registering all existing and future substances with the newly established European Chemicals Agency. Some 30,000 substances are expected to pass through the REACH system in three phases over 18 years.

The first phase, scheduled for completion on 30 November 2010, covers “high-production volume” chemicals (more than 1,000 tons per year) and substances “of very high concern.” The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) in Helsinki oversees the entire process in close co-operation with EU member states, institutions and stakeholders.

Cefic represents the industry as an observer in the Management Board and technical committees of ECHA.

About 4,400 substances are expected to be registered by 30 November 2010 by ECHA. This is considerably lower than some had expected but it does come close to some of the estimates made at the onset of the REACH programme. Work continues to identify potentially missing substances.

Cefic and its national member associations have made intensive efforts to inform, train, guide and help companies to meet the REACH deadline. Cefic’s ReachCentrum consultancy has played an instrumental role in helping producers manage consortia and Substance Information Exchange Forums (SIEFs.) ReachCentrum also offers workshops and in-company trainings for European and non European manufacturing companies.

Progressively all substances above one tonne either produced or imported in the EU will pass through the REACH procedure. This means that information on thousands of substances – gathered through a complex and resource intensive mechanism called a Data Sharing and Substance Information Exchange Forum involving many actors – will lead to an individual assessment and possible risk management measures. A challenging task thus lies ahead.