

Greater involvement in Responsible Care by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is a priority in Europe. In 2010 Cefic and a number of partner organizations successfully concluded a project dedicated to “Promoting Responsibility in SMEs”, known as prisme<sup>2</sup>.

Co-sponsored by the EU, the project involved the European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers’ Federation, Tomorrow’s Company, a UK-based think tank, and notably national associations of the chemical industries in the Czech and Slovak Republics, in Germany, Greece, Spain and the UK in a dedicated working group (see panel p9).

The chemical associations of the countries involved were responsible for implementing the project at national level and mostly adapted the broad prisme<sup>2</sup> template according to the specific needs and circumstances of local SMEs. At the same time, they were able to draw on the extensive partner network to provide them with insight and expertise for national and regional capacity building workshops. The bridge provided by the national associations to SMEs proved essential in terms of getting companies engaged in the project.

There are many thousands of small chemical companies in Europe, and Cefic itself has around 450 SME members. But just a handful replied when contacted about prisme<sup>2</sup> in its early stages.

Says Bernhard Thier, Cefic Responsible Care Manager: “Buy-in from the national associations was crucial, so as to reach the SMEs via their own local associations. In most of our pilot countries, face-to-face engagement through free, targeted workshops helped get companies properly engaged.”

One future objective is to keep the momentum going as the rollout of prisme<sup>2</sup> takes place in all European countries, a task in which national associations have a key role to play. Thier says this will be an ongoing effort with details being hammered out by key partners and Cefic’s Responsible Care Strategy Implementation Group that will “broaden the project base and strengthen the groundwork to provide a living capacity building framework.”

Thier says it is also important to continue to outreach to more SMEs in the countries involved in the pilot campaign, noting: “Greece has already confirmed that it plans to continue its series of workshops, as has the Slovak association. Their members have found the capacity building activities exceptionally useful.”

### Responsible Care tools for SMEs

Outreach will be an important element in the way forward. As part of the wider rollout, the prisme<sup>2</sup> approach will be regularly communicated to all Cefic member and associate national federations engaged in Responsible Care, as well as to member business associations and sector groups.

In June 2010 Cefic launched its ‘Responsible Care toolbox for SMEs’, which brings together for the first time validated guidelines and other instruments making them freely available for SMEs. These tools can help SMEs to manage issues related to occupational health, process safety, transport safety as well as energy efficiency, chemicals management and other areas.

Hubert Mandery, Director General of Cefic, says: “Responsible Care is the path to sustainable business success. SMEs are not less responsible than large companies, but they do appreciate help and guidance on these issues.”

The toolbox will be regularly revised and extended. At the time of publication of this report nearly 50 tools have been included. Special introductions to the toolbox and the learnings from prisme<sup>2</sup> have been given at workshops and conferences both within the EU and beyond. More outreach activities on the prisme<sup>2</sup> approach are planned for the future ensuring that the learnings can be shared even more extensively with chemical sector SMEs.

### Measuring effectiveness

An evaluation scheme based on a survey among prisme<sup>2</sup> participants was conducted by consortium partner Tomorrow’s Company to measure the effectiveness of workshops; assess the value gained by participating SMEs; and evaluate ways in which to make the workshops more functional and relevant. Some of the benefits identified by participants include:

- Opportunity to learn from other companies, particularly those with global operations.
- Gain knowledge of best practice and develop contacts with other specialist companies.
- Helpful overview on legislative requirements on chemical safety.
- Useful range of topics.

The evaluation helps facilitate the design of both future workshops and tools. Already additional topics are being integrated into workshop programmes to bridge knowledge gaps identified from the feedback. While some topics were covered in some of the pilot workshops, those which participants thought relevant for future workshops included environmental regulations and REACH; the Globally Harmonised System for Classification and Labeling of Chemicals; the Global Product Strategy; practical examples on improving safety; and hazard prevention.