

## Creating Effective Mechanisms for Communicating Chemical Risks to SMEs under REACH

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REACH raises many challenges for industry, and much has been written about the issues that registration poses for chemicals manufacturers and importers. Much less discussion has taken place on the nature of the changes that REACH will bring for *users* of chemicals, even though one of REACH's primary objectives is to ensure that the use of chemicals does not constitute a risk to man or the environment. In this respect, the Exposure Scenarios required by REACH represent a major step forward if they are able to effectively communicate such information to users of chemicals.

Effective communication is not always straightforward. A series of sometimes conflicting demands have to be addressed and reconciled before chemical suppliers are in a position to routinely provide such advice. Not least amongst these demands is the challenge of how to explain the safe use of chemicals in a manner that is understandable to SMEs whilst serving the primary REACH objective of conveying the measures required to ensure the safe use for man and the environment.

Similar risk communications challenges have already been addressed within various European structures, notably the UK COSHH Essentials scheme; the EMKG approach of the BAuA; and the activities of the Kooperationsstelle Hamburg. But, whilst these accommodate *ad hoc* enquiries, they have not been designed for incorporation into the systems that support routine communication within chemicals supply chains, e.g. safety data sheets. Recognising the proven utility of these approaches, CEFIC, together with supporting trade organisations, has now used these concepts to develop a consistent and understandable basis (and termed 'generic Exposure Scenarios') for industry's obligation under REACH to communicate chemicals risks.