

Russia Harmonises its Chemical Legislation with Reach



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■ **As the EU is Russia's largest export market, the country is working to pass its own Reach act and aims to harmonise it, as well as the system of classification and labelling of chemical substances, with the EU's Reach.**

Lauri Kinnunen

According to **Igor Kukuškin**, Executive Director of the Russian Chemists Union (RCU), the Union is taking an active role in preparing Russian industry for the new realities of the European market.

The RCU, together with the Russian Industry and Enterprise Union, has started all-round preparation of the chemical industry community for acceptance of Reach. They have decided to organise a permanent working commission of experts for carrying out a series of actions. In addition, a national

Reach Centre was established in connection with the RCU.

"Right now, we are gathering information, and trying to inform both business and public bodies," Kukuškin says.

More information needed

The Russian Reach Centre organises informative Reach seminars and publishes recommendations for methodologies. It has also created an information system on IUCLID 5 which plays a central role in the IT environments of all organisations that have to cope with the data submission requirements of Reach.

The Russian Chemists Union is also taking part in working out the Federal law "About the safety of chemical substances". A Russian proposal for a new technical regulation on chemicals has been judged by European experts to be quite similar compared to the Reach regulation.

Kukuškin is extremely worried about the absence of a developed Reach policy for third countries or non-EU countries, and as

a consequence the lack of detailed information.

To respond to this challenge, the EU has organised a helpdesk for small and medium-size businesses.

"Reach Implementation Projects (RIPs) are not ready. The ECHA system tells us: wait for the appearance of the RIPs," Kukuškin relates. "The complex law changes many rules, so the absence of methodical help for third countries such as Russia has serious consequences for them."

"For instance, it leads to much uncertainty concerning customs control, transport questions, registration of loads, documentation and currency regulation, among others," Kukuškin explains.

Due to these problems, public bodies are compelled to take a harder position than they otherwise would in their negotiations with the EU. The RCU worries about this tendency.

Big Russian businesses are aware of the social and ecological consequences of Reach, but possible complications that may create commercial barriers, along with the

Reach and Non-EU Countries

An EU solution to the problem of chemical safety, Reach calls for close cooperation between the EU and non-EU countries, especially Russia—a big chemical trading partner for Finland and the entire EU.

One of the features distinguishing the structure of the chemical industry trade with Russia from that with EU countries has been concentration on the trade in different product groups in exports and imports. Traditionally, imports from Russia have consisted of oil products and basic chemicals.

According to **Hannu Vornamo**, Director General, Chemical Industry Federation of Finland, there is reason to believe that imports from Russia to Finland and perhaps to other EU countries might be about to diversify.

"Thus, the cooperation in proper implementation and information exchange for the Reach system is still more important for continuing chemical trade in the European region as well as globally," Vornamo stresses.

Reach is only a regional solution to the global problem of chemical safety. If we want to improve global chemical safety and to boost innovation, it should widen worldwide, accord-

ing to Vornamo.

"If the result of Reach is that production and use of most hazardous chemicals migrates outside Europe to countries where safety issues are much lower on the agenda than in Europe, one might consider it as a step backward, not forward," reminds Vornamo.

If Russian enterprises refuse or cannot observe the norms and rules of Reach in all parts of an industrial chain, access of the export to the markets of countries of the European Community will be closed.

According to **Juha Pyötsiä**, Assistant Director, Chemical Industry Federation of Finland, implementation of the Reach regulations will be an extremely demanding task for the importers as well, and the most difficult part of it will be registration of substances, including chemical safety assessment.

"Pre-registration is required for extended registration and companies or Only Representatives must participate in the Substance Information Exchange Forum (SIEF)," says Pyötsiä.

"Important questions at the moment are, for example, the quality of test data (OECD), ownership of original studies, intellectual property rights, competition legislation, confidential business information, cooperation between companies and the WTO agreement, effects on R&D," Pyötsiä concludes.

unsettled questions that small-scale and middle-scale businesses have, cause intense uneasiness.

"Thus conditions for export to the EU are uncertain for Russian companies," Kukuškin points out.

"By our estimations, there are plans to shift up to 20% of export activity to other countries during the initial stage of implementation."

Russia is the European Union's third-largest trading partner and is a major centre for global chemicals production. The EU is by far Russia's largest export market.

RC paves the way towards Reach

The Russian Chemists Union joined the Responsible Care (RC) programme in October 2007 during the RCLG-ICCA and Cefic annual Conference in Paris.

Prior to this, there had been considerable long-term preparation, along with the Chemical Industry Federation of Finland, for entry into the RC programme.

Hannu Vornamo, Director General, Chemical Industry Federation of Finland, helped with clarifying the principles of RC in Russia, arranging exchanges of delegations and developing closer cooperation between chemical industry unions.

The RC programme creates a basis for moving towards a Russian Act for Reach and harmonising it with the EU Reach.

"Currently, we are in the first year of programme introduction, at the stage of writing

the first report. So we are concentrating our energy on preparation of basic documents concerning the RC programme," Kukuškin says.

"It is difficult to move from a "zero point", but we understand that this programme is the first step towards entry into the international community in a programme of stable development."

The Russian Chemists Union has begun the initial stages of working with the Safety & Quality Assessment System (SQAS) programme.

In the early 1990s, as a part of Responsible Care, Cefic launched the ICE (International Chemical Environment) programme, with the aim of improving safety during the transport, storage and handling of chemicals.

A key element of the programme was the development of a number of Safety and Quality Assessment Systems (SQAS) related to a particular transport mode or logistic operation.

"We are cooperating with the Ministry of Industry and Energy about preparation of a programme of long-term forecasting of chemical industry development based on the international trends in the field," Kukuškin describes.

"We suppose this work can be put into practice with international organisations based on the Responsible Care programme."

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The Russian Chemical Union

Consolidates leading Russian chemical production companies, research and educational institutions as well as chemistry-related unions, associations and vertically integrated structures.

Main activity areas:

- International relations
- Legislative support
- Communications
- Member's rights protection
- Responsible Care
- Harmonisation of legislation with international standards
- Exhibitions & Fairs.

Chemical industry in Russia:

- Over 600 large and medium sized manufacturing companies
- Over 100 scientific and research organisations
- Over 800,000 employees
- 6% of total domestic product
- 7% of Russian industrial fixed capital assets
- 5% of foreign currency national revenue.