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## Can Companies Reach the Goal?

The implementation of Reach is at a critical stage. No one knows yet if the three months' final sprint is enough to reach the goal on time.

The pressure is intense both in companies and in the European Chemicals Agency (Echa). It serves no-one's interests if this massive project fails and companies providing valuable services to society end up breaking the law despite all their efforts.

From a company's point of view, Echa has not made the task easy. Instructions have been provided bit by bit and often late. The companies have had to deduce which of the requirements apply to them and how the instructions should be applied. Communication with Echa experts is directed solely through electronic media, and requests for information are replied to with a delay. Furthermore, the replies often seem strange from the everyday operations point of view or even miss the actual question. Another big stumbling stone are the IT systems: their version updates and usage problems force companies to keep an armada of IT gurus on standby.

Echa, too, is frantically trying to figure out a way for tens of thousands of companies to get through the ordeal successfully. In exceptional cases with well-defined reasons, companies are allowed to submit incomplete registration dossiers, to be completed later. However, the prerequisites for extensions are still unclear, and each company must do its utmost to get all its substances duly registered by the deadline.

Work in Substance Information Exchange Forums (Siefs) is a story of its own. The beautiful idea that all manufacturers of a particular substance would produce the necessary data in cooperation might work in a perfect world.

In the real life competing companies are tempted to withhold information from each other or to get rid of the weakest links by, for instance, defining a standard of purity that some of the manufacturers are not able to reach.

We are facing an extremely strict sieving process that will unavoidably eliminate some of the players. Even the ones left in the field must bear in mind that the registration is only the beginning of a process which will have a permanent effect on business operations.

*Leena Laitinen*  
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