1 WHY THIS PROJECT IS IMPORTANT

There is a growing interest in our society in knowing about substances in articles available on the market and how to use the articles safely. If your company produces, imports or places articles on the EU market, you have an interest in knowing which substances are in your articles. You also need to tell your customers how to use those articles safely. This is only possible if you gather and share relevant information with your suppliers and customers. However, companies producing, importing or placing articles on the EU market may have difficulties in obtaining information and communicating it in the supply chain, on hazardous substances in articles.

The current project aims to assess, whether a platform on hazardous substances in materials could substantially improve the information availability and hence support companies in placing safe products on the market. The platform will focus on substances of very high concern under REACH (candidate list substances and substances potentially fulfilling the SVHC criteria but which are not included on the candidate list).

Please, make your opinions on the materials information platform known so the idea can be further developed and better adapted to the needs and possibilities of all stakeholders.

2 THE IDEA OF A MATERIALS INFORMATION PLATFORM (MIP)

2.1 Overall vision of the MIP

The MIP should contain information on which hazardous substances[1] could be contained in which types of materials used in the production of articles. For example could article producers and importers knowing the material composition of their article(s) retrieve a list of hazardous substances that could be contained in them and therewith focus their supply chain communication or chemical analyses. All stakeholders, including material producers, the Member State authorities or non-governmental organisations could contribute to the MIP by providing respective information on hazardous substances in materials from their work.

2.2 The MIP's rationale and information content

Chemical substances which are included and remain in materials usually have a specific (technical) function[2] they provide to that material. The function a substance provides may differ depending on the material it is included into or onto. Based on knowledge of the material composition of an article, indications of potentially contained hazardous substances (CLS or potential SVHC) could be retrieved from the MIP by combining the needed material functionalities with the substances known to provide that functionality.

[1] In particular in candidate list substances (CLS) and substances which could fulfil the criteria of REACH article 57 (potential SVHC)

[2] E.g. flame retardants, anti-corrosion agents, colourants

An example how the use of the MIP could look like is: An article importer identifies the materials included in his article and selects these from the MIP. He also may add information on the function of the materials in the article. As a potential result he could obtain for example:

- a list of CLS / potential SVHC which could be present in the different materials,
- concentration ranges of the CLS / potential SVHC in the materials (if present),
- information on which function the CLS / potential SVHC may fulfil in the material,
- indication on the likelihood that the CLS / potential SVHC are released from the materials.

He could use this information to gather further information so he can ensure that the article he places on the market is safe, e.g. by targeted supply chain communication or chemical analyses.

The following information types are currently under consideration for inclusion in the MIP. Each information type is likely to be further subdivided into distinct bits of information[3].

- Identification of materials
- General composition of the materials including their "standard" functionalities
- Specific functionalities of the materials achieved by adding substances
- SVHC known to be potentially contained in specific materials
- Substances incompatible with a material (occurrence can be excluded)
- Substances and their functionalities
- Typical concentration ranges of substances in materials (depending on the function)
- Release information related to the material
- Material properties (wear and tear / aging) and related possible substance release

2.3 The MIP's implementation and administration

During the study, initial information will be collected and first proposals will be developed regarding the MIP's implementation and administration. This includes the question of who should build up, run and maintain the MIP (ownership), who could and would contribute with information to the MIP and how (information provision by various actors considering confidentiality issues and resource constraints) as well as how the MIP could be linked to external databases.

3 INFORMATION ON THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

The study is divided into two phases: In the first phase the MIP concept is further developed by collecting information from stakeholders, experts and literature as well as from two examples with two articles. In the second phase the MIP more detailed examples will be developed for two materials.

The project results will be an initial proposal for the content, structure and potential implementation of a MIP, including an illustration of its functioning and benefits.

The project is commissioned by the European Chemicals Agency and carried out by Ökopol GmbH. It started in December 2014 and will end in September 2015. Depending on the outcome of the first phase, a second phase may be conducted to further assess the feasibility of the MIP.

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[3] For example the material identification may be sub-divided into the materials trivial name, its scientific name, a technical description and other identifiers.