

#### **44. Meeting of Competent Authorities for REACH and CLP (CARACAL) – follow-up – written comments – Agenda item 4.1 open session REACH**

##### **DE CA comment on document CA/22/2022 “SUPPLY CHAIN COMMUNICATION (SAFETY DATA SHEETS)”**

We would be in favour of restarting the activity in the established ENES network.

Concerning the two questions stated in the document we would like to respond as follows:

- a) What are your views on making the electronic provision of Safety Data Sheets obligatory, e.g. though a corresponding change in Article 31(8)?

In principle, we would agree with this. Today, it should be possible and appropriate for all companies to receive and manage safety data sheets exclusively electronically. (A printout on paper is then still possible). In addition, this avoids a media discontinuity if, for example, someone receives an SDS on paper but then has to create one himself.

However, it is crucial, especially for SME, that the information in the SDS remains easily accessible. A human readable version should always be transmitted (in addition to an XML format). It is important that the electronic provision of Safety Data Sheets does not preclude a recipient at any point in the supply chain to access and/or print the SDS and that the access is ensured in the long term.

- b) Do you support further analysis on a potential task for ECHA to develop a common framework for a standard format for the communication of information in the supply chain?

In principle, this is also supported from our point of view, but in close cooperation with experts from the fields of occupational safety and environmental protection (e.g. the ENES network). In addition, not only the technical aspect but also the expertise of communications experts should be taken into account for better acceptance of the new format.

Concerning the format, it should be noted that there are different categories of downstream users who also have very different needs and capabilities. An XML standard format brings advantages - above all- for formulators who receive and create many SDSs. For a small craftsman's business, there would be an additional burden/costs because software would be needed to put the data received back into a human readable format. Small end-users should therefore have the choice of whether they can accept the XML format or not. Or, as described above, the transmission of a human readable version (e.g. PDF, Word) should always (additionally) be mandatory.

From our point of view, ECHA as the central authority should be involved in a leading role. However, already existing solutions (e.g. by the automotive industry, GISBAU) should be reviewed/involved. Furthermore, easy exchange with the XML format e.g. for a poison centre notification or product passport should be possible.

A remaining concern is that the XML interface can be used to process and forward large amounts of data, resulting in extensive SDSs with long attachments. This can potentially lead to the information "rushing" through the supply chain unseen. In our view, it is not favourable to rely solely on electronic applications and tools (IUCLID; CHESAR; XML format) to prepare safety data sheets.

It is also important that the formats are easy to understand which would support the acceptance by the DU.