

Management of the relations with ECHA's stakeholders

1. Purpose

This procedure describes the overall responsibilities and mechanisms for understanding and addressing the needs of ECHA's stakeholders, and to allow ECHA thereby to better serve the EU Institutions and to make best use of the limited public resources.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to the activities linked to the relations between ECHA and its main stakeholder groups, including the stakeholders of the environment management system.

3. Description

ECHA engages with a diverse range of internal and external stakeholders, encompassing various actors throughout industrial supply chains, both within Europe and internationally. The Agency's scientific and technical outputs are collaboratively developed with the assistance of networks comprised of experts and representatives from European Union institutions, Member States, third countries, non-governmental organisations representing industry, workers, environmental, public health, and animal welfare interests, as well as academia. The regulatory responsibilities are efficiently facilitated by the staff of the ECHA secretariat.

This document outlines the principal stakeholder groups identified by the Agency, delineates internal responsibilities, and describes the tools utilised for stakeholder engagement and the management of stakeholder relations.

3.1. Stakeholders

3.1.1 Stakeholder groups

ECHA has identified and grouped its stakeholders as follows:

1. **Industrial duty holders:** Companies and other legal entities, including consultancies, interact with the Agency as duty holders. Their regulatory obligations are either described in the EU legislations assigning tasks to ECHA or result from implementation work carried out by ECHA under specific cooperation agreements with the European Commission.
2. **Institutional partners:** These stakeholders have a role in ECHA's governance and regulatory operations as defined by the EU legislation, or through specific agreements with ECHA. They are EU institutions (especially the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the European Court of Auditors), national authorities of EU and EEA/EFTA Member States as well as other EU agencies, the European Ombudsman, or the Data Protection Supervisor.

Management of the relations with ECHA's stakeholders

- 3. International partners:** These are third countries (in particular OECD Member States and EU accession countries) and multilateral organisations (for instance, the OECD and UNEP) as well as parties to and bodies serving international conventions, such as the UN Rotterdam, Basel or Stockholm Conventions. The State of Finland and the City of Helsinki are local international stakeholders.
- 4. ECHA Bodies, Networks and Expert Groups:** These stakeholders, individuals and/or their organisations, form part of ECHA's statutory ECHA bodies (Management Board, Committee for Risk Assessment, Committee for Socio-economic Analysis, Member State Committee, Biocidal Products Committee, Forum for Exchange of Information on Enforcement and Board of Appeal) or informal networks and expert groups established by ECHA or the European Commission.
- 5. Third parties:** The EU regulations managed by ECHA specifically provide for the right of third parties to bring to the attention of ECHA information on chemicals and other scientific information. These stakeholders therefore have an interest in ECHA's work but not necessarily regulatory obligations. They can be citizens, the local community, individual companies, non-governmental organisations representing consumer, public health, environment, workers or industry, academia, or research institutes.
- 6. Staff:** This stakeholder group includes all ECHA employees, including the Staff Committee, seconded national experts and trainees.
- 7. Service providers:** This stakeholder group includes contractors working in ECHA premises, the Landlord, service providers and suppliers.

3.1.2 Accredited Stakeholder Organisations

ECHA administers an accreditation program for stakeholder organisations, a strategic initiative aimed at fostering close collaboration with accredited stakeholders (ASOs). This collaborative partnership enhances the seamless exchange of information between ECHA and stakeholders. ASOs actively bolster ECHA's mission through participation in various bodies and networks. The criteria for ASO accreditation are formally adopted by the Management Board, in agreement with the European Commission.

ASOs serve as overarching European-level entities representing a diverse array of interests. Organisations seeking ASO accreditation must meet the eligibility criteria established by the Management Board (as detailed in MB/34/2011) as outlined in WIN-0074. Representatives from ASOs may receive invitations to participate in meetings of ECHA's scientific Committees, provided they are duly registered in the European Commission's Transparency Register.

The responsibility for managing accreditation applications, maintaining the ASO registry, organising events, and effectively communicating with stakeholders rests with the Communications Unit. This unit is committed to delivering increasingly tailored and relevant information to different stakeholder groups, ensuring the transparent and efficient operation of the accreditation scheme.

3.2. Roles and responsibilities in ECHA's stakeholder relations

The **Executive Director** ensures the management of the relations with stakeholders and approves the relevant high-level documentation.

Management of the relations with ECHA's stakeholders

Process Owners and staff members are in charge of engaging the stakeholders that are involved in the processes under their responsibility (PRO-0008). The relations are managed in line with ECHA's organisational values (transparent, independent, trustworthy, efficient and committed to well-being). In relations with the public all staff members respect ECHA's Code of Good Administrative Behaviour, the Public service principles for the EU civil service established by the European Ombudsman as well as other relevant internal rules, policies and strategies.

The **Communications Unit** supports the process owners at defining and implementing the communication aspects of the stakeholder procedure, in particular through a common Communications strategy as described in PRO-0055.

The **Governance, Strategy and Relations Unit** supports the Executive Director and the Directors team with the engagement of institutional partners and the Management Board which ensures the involvement of stakeholders in ECHA's governance¹.

The **Human Resources Unit** supports the Executive Director in managing staff relations.

3.3. Stakeholder engagement aspects

3.3.1. Planning

Identify stakeholders and define stakeholder needs

Stakeholders are identified and grouped according to their nature and the type of their involvement in the activities of the Agency, including those that are relevant for the environmental management system, as outlined in ECHA's process and activity structure.

The considerations of stakeholder demands and expectations are integral to the decision-making processes of ECHA. Process owners, tasked with designing, developing, and enhancing the Agency's work program deliverables factor in these stakeholder perspectives to ensure that the Agency's initiatives remain responsive and aligned with their needs.

Compliance obligations

The Agency's compliance obligations related to stakeholder relationship management are laid down in the applicable EU legislation, in particular ECHA's founding regulation which stipulates in Recital 95 that *"The Agency should be central to ensuring that chemicals legislation and the decision-making processes and scientific basis underlying it have credibility with all stakeholders and the public. The Agency should also play a pivotal role in coordinating communication around this Regulation and in its implementation. The confidence in the Agency of the EU Institutions, the Member States, the general public and interested parties is therefore essential. For this reason, it is vital to ensure its independence, high scientific, technical and regulatory capacities, as well as transparency and efficiency"*.

¹ See Recital 98 of Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006), namely Member States, EEA/ EFTA countries, European Commission, European Parliament, industry, trade unions and environment and public health NGOs.

Management of the relations with ECHA's stakeholders

Relevant commitments are also expressed in the ECHA Programming Document which is adopted by the Management Board on an annual basis.

Key compliance obligations for ECHA are:

- a) The duty of the Management Board to develop, in agreement with the Commission, appropriate contacts between the Agency and relevant stakeholder organisations (Art 108 of the REACH Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006).
- b) The eligibility criteria for ECHA Accredited Stakeholder Organisations, adopted by the Management Board on 21 June 2011 (MB/34/2011 final) on the basis of Art 108 of the REACH Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006.
- c) The duty of the Executive Director to establish and maintain a regular dialogue with the European Parliament (Art 83 (2) (k) of the REACH Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006).
- d) The duty to take all appropriate steps to act on the observations accompanying the European Parliament's discharge decision and on the comments accompanying the recommendation for discharge adopted by the Council in relation to the ECHA's performance and budgetary and financial management (Art 110 of ECHA's Financial Regulation).
- e) The expectations to coordinate with the different actors charged with the definition and implementation of a policy to exercise the functions of ECHA, involve stakeholders in internal bodies and/or advisory groups/working groups, where appropriate and to ensure that the relations with stakeholders (e.g. the United Nations and other international organisations, sister agencies in third countries, and Member States' agencies) are coherent with ECHA's mandate, the institutional division of tasks in international relations, EU policies and priorities, and Commission's action (points 42-44 of the Common Approach on EU Agencies, adopted by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in 2012)
- f) The duty to take into account the opinion of the European Commission when developing the Agency's activity programming and to provide adequate explanations if this is not fully done (Art 32(2) of ECHA's Financial Regulation).
- g) According to Article 103(1) REACH, the staff of the Agency shall be subject to the Regulations and Rules applicable to officials and other servants of the European Union. In this regard, a Staff Committee and one or more Joint Committees are set-up to represent the interests of the staff vis-à-vis the Agency and maintain continuous contact between the Agency and the staff (Article 9 of the EU Staff Regulations No 31 (EEC) as amended). Moreover, staff of the Agency shall have access to measures of a social nature, including specific measures to reconcile working life with family life (Art 1e(1) of the EU Staff Regulations).
- h) Voluntary ECHA commitments such as the ECHA transparency approach.

Plan actions according to ECHA Programming Document and unit-level plans

The needs and expectations of internal and external ECHA's stakeholders are taken into account in the planning and reporting cycle as established in PRO-0013.

Define stakeholder strategies where necessary

Stakeholder strategies (including action plans) can be defined by ECHA management and process owners to steer the work with specific stakeholder groups.

3.3.2. Implementing

Carry-out activities according to work programmes and involve stakeholders

Stakeholders actively participate in ECHA's diverse array of activities, which span from their involvement in events to formal consultations. This engagement takes place either on an individual basis or through established networks, including the HelpNet, ECHA's Management Board, Committees, and Forum, as well as through initiatives like the ECHA NGO platform. Moreover, stakeholders have opportunities to engage in one-on-one meetings with senior management and benefit from targeted communications strategies, which encompass channels like social media and dedicated sections on the Agency's website.

Furthermore, stakeholders are regularly consulted on various facets of ECHA's activities. They are promptly notified of pertinent regulatory initiatives through mechanisms such as PACT, CoRAP, and the identification of Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC), ensuring that they are well-informed and actively involved in shaping ECHA's regulatory landscape.

ECHA's work program undergoes annual adoption by the Management Board, following consultations with representatives from all Member States, the Commission, interested parties, and independent individuals appointed by the European Parliament. This program, outlined in the Programming Document, is prepared by the Executive Director with the support of the secretariat. It incorporates a diverse array of feedback, including input from European Commission services and the European Parliament, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive decision-making process.

To facilitate effective coordination with stakeholders, ECHA's process owners employ common tools, such as the Events and Logistics Management (ELM) tool. This platform serves as a centralised hub for event and logistics management and also functions as a vital repository of external contacts across all of ECHA's principal stakeholder groups.

Furthermore, ECHA proactively notifies relevant stakeholders in the event of crisis prevention and management, as well as for business continuity purposes, adhering to the established procedures outlined in the Crisis Communications plan (PLA-0017). Tools like ELM can be employed for mass emailing to reach accredited stakeholders or disseminate Twitter messages to engage other stakeholder groups, ensuring swift and effective communication during critical situations.

3.3.3. Collecting and using stakeholder feedback

Review the progress of the fulfilment of work programme objectives based on stakeholder feedback

Process owners collect feedback from relevant stakeholders by gathering and analysing the information from several different sources, such as suggestions and complaints, surveys, general inquiries, web forms, stakeholder workshops, webinars and stakeholder events.

Management of the relations with ECHA's stakeholders

Direct feedback is collected by relevant process owners during the year through the usual interaction. General feedback is collected via the web form available to the general public. Complaints are recorded as outlined in PRO-0015.

Process owners and staff have the responsibility of actively considering and addressing input, suggestions, and concerns put forward by stakeholders. When deemed appropriate, feedback channels may elevate the matter to the notice of senior management, primarily through the Directors' meeting (DT). The Executive Director and/or the DT undertake a review of insights gathered from all pertinent sources related to ECHA's stakeholder interactions as necessary.

Furthermore, essential high-level insights into the Agency's performance and services are gathered through feedback from key stakeholders. Critical feedback is, for example, provided by stakeholders represented in the Management Board level the regular reports from the Agency about its ongoing activities, or incorporated in the annual European Commission Opinion on the draft ECHA Programming Document.

Additionally, ECHA's performance undergoes thorough scrutiny and discussion within the European Parliament and the Council. These deliberations are informed by input not only from the Management Board but also the European Court of Auditors and, more broadly, Members of the European Parliament during the institutional discharge process. This comprehensive review encompasses various aspects such as performance, transparency, independence, sound financial management, efficiency, and staff-related matters. The Executive Director plays a pivotal role in this process by reporting on the implementation of recommendations to both the European Parliament and the Management Board.

Furthermore, the Executive Director is regularly invited to engage in substantive discussions with the European Parliament Committee for Environment, Public Health, and Food Safety. This forum serves as a crucial platform for gathering and discussing stakeholder feedback. It is worth noting that this committee carries formal responsibility for ECHA and designates one of its members as a liaison Member of the European Parliament (MEP) for ECHA, further strengthening the channel for stakeholder engagement and communication.

ECHA's commitment to maintaining robust stakeholder relations is also a key consideration in the annual assessment of the Integrated Management System Strategy and Framework (IMSS & F - POL-0001, which constitutes also ECHA's Quality Policy). This evaluation aligns with one of the core principles of the IMSS & F, which emphasizes the importance of fostering an open and transparent, mutually beneficial dialogue with the Agency's regulatory partners and stakeholders.

The outcomes of this assessment are shared with the Director Team and the Management Board. Furthermore, these insights are integrated into ECHA's annual report to the EU Institutions and the public. This holistic approach ensures that ECHA's dedication to constructive engagement with stakeholders is not only recognised but also documented in its annual reporting, reinforcing the commitment to transparency and accountability.

Surveys are conducted as needed to provide process owners with feedback on their services from their internal and external customers.

Some ECHA units may carry out satisfaction surveys among their internal customers (other ECHA units) to collect information on their satisfaction with the internal services they provide.

3.3.4. Improvements and corrective/ preventive action

Based on the feedback received, improvements are decided at the relevant level after analysis by Management: they may consist of the need to develop and or update processes, or to carry out new projects and evolutions to provide new services, or to enhance current operations. They are then used for the planning for the next work programmes and unit-level plans.

The aggregated information about the stakeholder satisfaction is an input to the Management Review exercise, described in PRO-0016.

In case the targets in terms of stakeholder satisfaction are not met, nonconformities can be recorded as outlined in PRO-0015.

4. Flowchart

N/A

Management of the relations with ECHA's stakeholders

5. Definitions

Term or abbreviation	Definition
ECHA's stakeholder	All organisations and individuals interested in or affected by the chemicals regulations and ECHA's activities.
Stakeholder/ Interested party	Person or organisation that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision or activity [ISO 9000:2015]
Process Owner	Role in charge of the end-to-end management of an ECHA Process, including the identification, analysis and engagement of the stakeholder(s) that are involved in, or affected by the process.
IMS	Integrated Management System
DM	Directors' Meeting
ASO	Accredited stakeholder organisation
IMSS & F	Integrated Management System Strategy and Framework (POL-0001)
PACT	Public Activities Coordination Tool
SVHC	Substances of Very High Concern
CoRAP	Community Rolling Action Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
ELM	Events and logistics management

6. Records

Record name	Security level	Comments
Annual discharge reports and ECHA's replies	Public	
Annual Assessment of ECHA's Integrated Management System Framework	Public	
Annual opinion of the European Commission on ECHA's draft Programming Document and the Agency's replies (MB documentation)	Internal	
List of Accredited Stakeholder Organisations	Public	

7. References

Associated document code	Document name
(EC) No 1907/2006	REACH Regulation
(EC) No 1272/2008	CLP Regulation
(EU) No 528/2012	Biocidal Product Regulation
98/8/EC	Biocidal Product Directive
(EU) No 649/2012	PIC Regulation
ISO 9000:2015	Quality management systems – Fundamentals and vocabulary
ISO 9001:2015	Quality management systems – Requirements
ISO 9004:2009	Managing for the sustained success of an organization – A quality management approach
ISO 14001:2015	Environmental management systems – Requirements with guidance for use
MB/32/2013	Code of Good Administrative Behaviour for the Staff of the European Chemicals Agency
MB/34/2011	Revised eligibility criteria for ECHA's Accredited Stakeholder Organisations
MB/05/2008	Proactive engagement with all ECHA's stakeholders
MB/29/2019	Financial Regulation of the European Chemicals Agency
-	ECHA's Communication Strategy 2019-2023

8. Annexes

N/A