

Welcome speech by Mr. Uwe Lahl, BMU (Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety)

Head of Directorate – General IG: Environmental Safety, Immission control, Safety of Installations and Transport, Chemical Safety

at the opening of the “R” in REACH who has to fulfil what and when? – workshop

21. June 2007, Wissenschaftszentrum, Bonn

Dear Mr Hennessy,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this workshop in Bonn today on behalf of the German Environment Ministry. The interest to participate in this workshop was overwhelming. We had much more applications for participation than places available and I regret that it was not possible to invite more persons. I take this as a clear indication that companies are now preparing for REACH and that the sometimes heated discussions during the legislative processes are finished.

I am particularly pleased that the compromise finally achieved was supported by a broad majority of the members of the European Parliament and by all Member States. This is important because REACH is not a piece of legislation asking only for minor investments. Rather, it is an enormous challenge to many companies and – please don't forget this – to the competent authorities.

I am aware that the implementation of REACH will give rise to many new questions to the authorities. This is why helpdesks were established and numerous workshops were organised. And these activities will continue in the future. The complexity of the chemicals legislation will confront us with new and difficult questions and the need to find an appropriate answer.

In this context, I would like to express my gratitude to the Commission services which have already started very early to consider the steps to be taken after the legislative process has come to an end. I can't remember any other case where the planning of the implementation phase was started so far in advance of the adoption of the legislation. Today we profit from this sensible planning and be informed about the results of this important work.

The time-planning for implementing REACH is very ambitious. Already in one year's time, the first registrations will be sent to the European Chemicals Agency. The first major challenge to the companies will be the pre-registration which is scheduled for the last six months of next year. After this is finished, SIEF Formation is on the agenda which requires cooperation between companies to an unprecedented extent. This cooperation offers many advantages to the companies. It helps to reduce the overall cost for testing and hazard assessment and it avoids double testing of chemical substances thus reducing the amount of animals needed.

I know that not all companies welcome this data sharing mechanism – and I understand the reasons. However, I am convinced that the overall benefit for our society clearly surpasses any disadvantages. SIEF formation and joint submission of registration dossiers will be the acid test for the companies.

Finally, I would like to thank Ms. Ann Bambauer and her team from the Federal Institute of Occupational Safety and Health for preparing this workshop. It has been a tough week for

you as you had not only to prepare for this event but also for two Commission meetings earlier this week.

I now hand over the microphone to Mr Patrick Hennessy from the Commission. Mr Hennessy is Director in the DG Enterprise and has been responsible for chemicals in this position since 1999. Mr Hennessy, I am very grateful for your support during the organisation of this meeting and thank you very much for coming here.