



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
ENVIRONMENT
Zero Pollution
ENV.C.4 - Industrial Emissions & Safety

Brussels, 13 June 2023

10th Meeting of the Commission Expert Group on the control of major accident hazards involving dangerous substances ("Seveso Expert Group")

Hybrid Meeting, Brussels, 13 June 2023

Final Minutes

1. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

1.1. Welcome

The non-public meeting of the Seveso Expert Group (SEG) was attended by 105 participants. Representatives of all Member States (MS) except Lithuania attended the meeting (see list of participants in annex). The following observers were in attendance: Norway, Switzerland, EEA, OECD, UNECE, CEFIC, CONCAWE and FECC ; and from the Commission Services: JRC.E.2, ECHO.A.3, NEAR.C.1, ENV 01 and ENV.C.4.

The meeting was chaired by ENV.C.4, who welcomed the participants and kindly reminded the rules of conduct for the hybrid meeting.

1.2. Adoption of the Agenda

The draft agenda of the meeting was sent to the Seveso Expert Group members on the 17 May 2023. An updated version of the draft agenda was sent on the 8 June 2023.

The main objectives of this meeting were to share national, European, and international recent information and for the Commission to present the overall objectives and milestones for the review of the Decision establishing the format for communicating information from MS on the implementation of the Seveso-III Directive.

Under any other business (AOB), the Commission received requests to add three items to the agenda to be addressed during the SEG meeting. One MS requested to add a discussion point to the agenda about the role of the MAHB after 2025. Another MS requested to discuss Seveso-III provisions related to the information of the Commission following major accidents. Finally, DG ECHO requested to provide an update on planned scientific partnership for chemical incidents.

The agenda was adopted accordingly.

1.3. Adoption of the minutes of the 9th Meeting (23rd June 2022)

Draft minutes of the 9th SEG meeting held on 23rd June 2022 were sent to the SEG members on 23 June 2022 for comments. No comments were received. The final minutes were sent to the SEG members with the invitation for this meeting on 17 May 2023 and uploaded to CIRCABC on 4 June 2023 in the CIRCABC space for the 9th meeting. The SEG members adopted the final minutes of the 9th SEG meeting.

2. MEMBER STATES' ACTIVITIES

2.1. Information on Kočevje, Zasavska accident in Slovenia

SL presented the analysis of the accident that happened in Kočevje on 12 May 2022. The accident took place in an upper-tier establishment with 200 employees and was caused by the chemical reaction of two incompatible substances. Specifically, it happened during the loading of one of these substances into a storage tank. The analysis by SL focused on the emergency response and communication with the public, which involved the operator, the city's mayor, and the head of intervention. Subsequent investigations revealed a series of human errors that led to the uncontrolled chemical reaction. These errors included the driver parking the vehicle at the wrong loading station, the operator failing to recognize the hazardous substance label and transport documentation and initiating the loading process before confirming the substance through laboratory testing. Following the accident, SL established a working group to investigate the cause and develop a lesson learned report to prevent similar incidents in the future. Within six months, the working group conducted an analysis and prepared a detailed report, available on the eMARS database. A general recommendation for all operators in SL was to verify the presence of incompatible substances and address safety measures in their reports, as well as to enhance the safety culture in Seveso establishments thanks to more debate with inspectors.

JRC informed the SEG members that the accident was discussed at the Working Group on Seveso Inspections¹ (TWG 2) and announced the start of the work on Inspector framework for human factors. Further informed that observed a suggestion to prepare Common inspection criteria for loading and unloading.

2.2. Information on Spanish biodiesel plant accident in the north-eastern region of La Rioja in Spain

ES gave details and shared lessons learned from the accident in a biodiesel plant in the municipality of Calahorra on 26 May 2022. The accident, in a lower-tier establishment, was caused by welding work on storage tank done by subcontracting agency. The accident resulted in two fatalities. Other workers at the plant were safely evacuated. A group of 250 children on an excursion at a nearby bird park was also evacuated. MS shared its analysis and the lessons learned from this accident: the need to review all technical documents, the importance of inspections and the need to raise the citizens awareness around Seveso sites.

The Chair opened the floor for discussion.

¹ https://minerva.jrc.ec.europa.eu/EN/content/minerva/4748cdf1-56be-44a1-9f3b-c4e75f319fbc/technical_working_group_on_seveso_inspections_twg_2

JRC brought the attention of the SEG participants to the document on common inspection criteria for the management of contactors² that was released in 2022 and further addressed the coordination of the emergency response.

2.3. Information on Lithium-ion batteries accidents in France

FR provided its analysis of accidents in batteries energy storage facilities. The presentation was based on the 2022 study conducted by General Directorate for Risk Prevention, the BARPI (French acronym for Bureau for Analysis of Industrial Risks and Pollutions) that is tasked with compiling, analysing, and disseminating information and experience feedback for industrial accidents. Amongst the accidents, 60% took place in facilities that were operating within their permit requirements. According to the study the major risk is the risk of fire, release of hazardous substances and explosions. The risk of fire can be caused by thermal runaway (material or electrical damage) leading to release of flammable gases. In terms of injuries mainly burns. Economical consequences including property damage, environmental consequences (air pollution, ground contamination). FR emphasised that it is new sector where operators might not be fully familiar with risks it poses. Finally, FR shared results of tests to extinguish batteries fires: while not always technically feasible, immersing the batteries in water is the best solution.

3. COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

3.1. Update about the redevelopment of eSPIRS/eMARS by EEA

On 31 August 2022, Commission Implementing Decision 2022/1979 establishing the form and databases for communicating the information referred to in Articles 18(1) and 21(3) has been adopted. It sets out the new reporting form for the reporting under eSPIRS and will apply from 2026. Since January 2023, it also gives the EEA a formal role in setting up and keeping up to date the electronic databases eSPIRS and eMARS.

EEA introduced the next steps in redeveloping the two databases and the planned activities concerning the preparation of the reporting platform and of the guidance documents for reporting. EEA informed the SEG members it will issue letter to national coordinator to nominate contact point for eSPIRS and eMARS and will organise in Q4 2023 a workshop to receive initial feedbacks on EEA's plan and proposals for the redevelopment of eSPIRS and eMARS. Some SEG participants asked for the nomination to be organised via the Seveso Expert Group.

3.2 Information on the 4 years implementation report template review

DG ENV presented the legal context regarding the review of the Decision establishing the format for communicating information from MS on the implementation of the Seveso-III Directive. COM also recalled that MS reports for the 2019-2022 period are expected to be received by 30 September 2023 for. The format of the report is set out in the Commission Implementing Decision 2014/896/EU.

DG ENV highlighted the challenges with the current reporting template set out in this Decision 2018/896, as the information gathered are hardly comparable. Therefore, an excel questionnaire is under development to focus mainly on quantitative and comparable

² https://minerva.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/shorturl/minerva/cic_subcontractors_final_formattedpubsypdf

information. With regards to the qualitative information, COM outlined that this information will be discussed on more regular basis thanks to the implementation support project led by Ricardo.

DG ENV summarised the outcomes of the consultation and the workshop to improve the current template: MS provided full support to its review and requested to focus on quantitative information to decrease the administrative burden. COM announced it will release the draft new template after the SEG meeting for an official consultation and expect to receive feedback by October 2023.

3.3 Update on Major Accident Hazards Bureau (MAHB) activities

The Commission (DG JRC-MAHB) updated the SEG members on the following:

a) Support and collaboration with different international bodies:

The JRC recalled it has over 35 years collaboration with the OECD Working Group on Chemical Accidents to support improvement in chemical accident prevention and preparedness globally, as well as other international organizations, especially UNECE and UN Environment

The JRC informed the SEG members on several activities including past and future webinars on lessons learned and the role of inspectors and on webinars on Seveso inspection practices including EU and OECD joint events on Hydrogen fuel risks (September 2023) and on practices for inspecting/monitoring hydrogen sites (2024).

The JRC also outlined its work with OECD Working Party on Chemical Accidents on seminar on safety of hazardous chemicals handling in ports, promoting more advanced approaches to lessons learning raising awareness of chemical safety risks associated with the energy transition (climate change).

b) Accident and establishment statistics

The JRC provided an overview of 2021-2022 preliminary findings of recent chemical accidents with high significance reported in the global media. It updated the SEG members on the accident and establishment statistics (25-35 accidents/year dominated by chemical industry) and emphasised that the annual eMARS major accident statistics are not representative of any trend but serves only for comparative purposes (patterns of causality, sectors involved, etc.).

c) Lessons learned analyses

The JRC provided a brief overview of recent lessons learned bulletin and shared with the SEG members additional information related to the release of the following lessons learned bulletins and handbooks available on the [Minerva platform](#):

- Lessons learned from chemical accidents involving power failures (2021)
- Lessons learned from chemical accidents in warehouses (2022)
- Lessons learned from chemical accidents in waste management sites
- Lessons learned handbook (final draft 2024) – in collaboration with the Accident Analysis Benchmarking Exercise (AABE) Group

d) Development of the CAPRI-Chemical Accident Information Portal

The JRC presented its ongoing project “CAPRI”, related to the development of a one-stop shop portal for information on recent and historical chemical disasters, influential investigation reports, and eMARS statistics. It informed that the official launch of CAPRI is expected in autumn 2023.

e) Cooperation with DG ECHO

Finally, the JRC presented the list of additional activities carried out for DG ECHO and DG ENV:

- War in Ukraine - briefings to DG ECHO on identification of most vulnerable sites, advice on preparedness, incident monitoring.
- Briefings to DG ECHO on chemical incidents in Sitikunda, Bangladesh and Aqabi, Jordan.
- Initial monitoring and analysis of the Oder River transboundary contamination event (July/August 2022).
- Contribution on cross-boundary chemical disasters and energy transition risks for upcoming DG ECHO report on emerging disaster risks.
- Technical support to the EU CBRN Centers of Excellence Initiative – workshops, occasional advice on Seveso implementation and risk assessment for capacity building project leaders.

4. INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

DG ENV recalled the results of the connectivity test to the Industrial Accident notification (IAN) system performed on 21 July 2022. It outlined that only half of the Parties to the Convention, incl. EU countries, replied to the test.

DG ENV also emphasised the importance of the IAN system in term of response to major industrial accident. It is the only international tool that enable notification of a third-Party countries in the event of a major industrial accident with potential transboundary effect, either caused by an operator settled in your country or in a neighbouring country.

DG ENV encouraged MS to liaise with their IAN point of contact and with the TEIA Secretariat to ensure that the points of contact details are updated. It called upon MS to ensure a better result for the next test.

4.1 UNECE Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (TEIA)

The TEIA Secretariat provided an update on recent developments and activities: Ukraine became the 42nd Party to the Convention; the CoP adopted a decision to strengthen Natech risk management in the ECE region and beyond and endorsed a roadmap to improve mine tailings safety; CoP also approved the workplan and resource requirements for the Convention for 2023-2024.

The TEIA Secretariat also reported on past activities, including support to the National Policy Dialog in Serbia, enhancing Convention implementation in Georgia, and partnering with the EIB to support Ukraine. Other workplan activities involved outreach, communications, awareness-raising, strategic partnerships, the Industrial Accidents Notification System, and general program management.

It mentioned also planned publication activities, including a risk assessment publication, joint guidance on managing Natech risk, and a brochure on the Assistance and Cooperation Program.

The Secretariat concluded the presentation by highlighting the increase relevance of the TEIA convention and the need for financial support to implement the Convention workplan, while reflecting on the dynamic environment: climate change, new economic growing tendency to shorten supply chains, and emerging risks associated with the transition to a decarbonized economy.

4.2 OECD Working Group on Chemical Accidents (WGCA)

OECD participant provided the SEG with an update of the OECD Working Group on Chemical Accidents (WGCA) activities. It outlined the released of the OECD decision-recommendation focusing on chemical accident prevention, preparedness, and response³. This recommendation is accompanied by the third version of the OECD Guiding Principles for Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response.

SEG participants were informed that two webinars have been scheduled: one on the management of hazardous substances in port areas on June 27, 2023, and another on different types of chemical accidents in port areas on June 28, 2023.

OECD outlined that the WGCA is currently engaged in the development of joint guidance with the OECD, UN, and the JRC on Natech (natural hazards triggering technological accidents) risk management for senior leaders in both industry and public authorities. Furthermore, the WGCA is also working on guidance to highlight the benefits of regulation in preventing chemical accidents.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1. Role of the MAHB after 2025

Almost all MS, attending the meeting online or in-person, expressed serious concerns regarding the possible work discontinuation of JRC-MAHB after 2025 as it is providing crucial support to them on industrial safety. They argued that a potential lost of the MAHB would have direct impact on the future implementation of Seveso-III Directive.

One industry association provided its support to MS statements and highlighted that MAHB's work on the analysis of accident has proven to be crucial for improvement of the safety.

The JRC stated that the situation remains unclear and that the work program goes until 2024.

DG ENV acknowledged the importance of MAHB's work and committed to bring it up to the hierarchy for their consideration. DG ENV encouraged MS to raise their concerns also during high level meetings.

³ <https://www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/oecd-guiding-principles-for-chemical-accident-prevention-preparedness-and-response-third-edition-162756bf-en.htm>

5.2. Requirements related to the information of the Commission on major accidents (FR)

FR asked how to consider an accident meeting the criteria of Annex VI, where no major emission or a major explosion or major fire occurred or that didn't lead to serious danger to human health or the environment. MS were invited to provide their practices in this respect.

MS and DG agreed that in the cases presented there was no need to notify such accidents as “major”, outlining that it could be helpful to be reported as incident to enrich the lessons learned development process.

5.3. DG ECHO update on planned scientific partnership for chemical incidents

DG ECHO provided information related to an upcoming call for tenders. The awarded consortium would form the chemical aspect of the European Anthropogenic Hazards Scientific Partnership (EAHSP) and will work to enhance the ERCC's technical and analytical capacity in case of chemical accidents or incidents. DG ECHO pointed out that it is necessary to put in place partnership assessing the potential impact of chemical accidents.

In particular, the objective of the envisaged EAHSP is to exploit science and technology and reinforce the linkages between civil protection, emergency management and scientific communities at the European level. The intended partnership should strengthen European Commission capacity in the field of early warning and impact assessment capacity for chemical events in Europe and beyond.

The SEG members were asked to reply to the agenda item in writing by 30.6. 2023.

JRC noted that is necessary to build a good representative team of chemical hazmat experts.

6. CLOSURE

The Chair thanked all participants of the Seveso Expert Group for the constructive and fruitful discussion and the interpreters for their support and hard work facilitating the meeting.

Belgium informed that next SEG meeting will be hold from 10 to 12 April 2024, in Mons, Belgium, during the Belgium Presidency of the Council of the EU.

SEG members and observers were invited to provide written comments or observations to the relevant agenda items by 30 June 2023.

Attachments:

- Annex I: List of participants and observers.

ANNEX TO THE MINUTES OF THE 10TH SEG MEETING: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1.1. European Commission

ENV	Directorate General for Environment - Unit C.4 and 01
JRC	Joint Research Centre - Unit E.2
ECHO	Directorate General European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations – Unit A.3
NEAR	Directorate General European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations – Unit C.1

1.2. Member States

Country	Organisation
Austria	Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK)
Austria	Federal Ministry of Labor and Economic Affairs
Austria	Styria administration
Belgium	Federal Public Service Employment Labor and Social Dialogue
Belgium	Federal Public Service Home Affairs
Belgium	Flemish administration environment
Belgium	Public Service of Wallonia
Bulgaria	Ministry of Environment and Water
Croatia	Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Trade
Cyprus	Civil Defense
Cyprus	Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Insurance
Czech Republic	Ministry of the Environment
Denmark	Ministry of the Environment
Estonia	Consumer Protection and Technical Regulatory Authority
Estonia	Estonian Rescue Board
Finland	Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency (Tukes)
Finland	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment
Finland	Ministry of Interior
France	Ministry for Ecological Transition
Germany	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection
Germany	Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure
Germany	State Agency for Nature, Environment and Consumer Protection of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia
Germany	Federal Environment Agency
Greece	Ministry of environment and energy
Hungary	National Directorate General for Disaster Management
Ireland	Health and Safety Authority
Italy	Ministry of environment and energy security
Latvia	State Environmental Bureau
Latvia	Division of Industrial accident risk assessment of State
Luxembourg	Labor and mine inspection
Malta	Occupational Health and Safety Authority
Netherlands	Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management

Netherlands	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
Poland	Chief Inspectorate of Environmental Protection
Portugal	Environmental Protection Agency
Portugal	Portuguese National Authority for Emergency and Civil Protection
Romania	Ministry of Home Affairs, General inspectorate for emergency situation
Romania	National Environmental Protection Agency
Romania	Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests
Slovak Republic	Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic
Slovenia	Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief
Slovenia	Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Energy
Spain	General Directorate of Civil Protection under the Ministry of Interior
Spain	Regional Government of la Rioja
Sweden	Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency

1.3. Observers

1.3.1 EU agencies

EEA	European Environment Agency
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1.3.2 Non-EU countries

Country	Organisation
Norway	Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection
Switzerland	Federal Office for the Environment

1.3.3 International Organisations

OECD	Working Group on Chemical Accidents
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, TEIA secretariat

1.3.4 Non-governmental organisations

CEFIC	European Chemical Industry Council
CONCAWE	European Petroleum Refiners Association
FECC	European Association of Chemical Distributors