

Helsinki, 26 May 2015

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To the members of the
HelpNet Steering Group

To the contact persons of the
REACH 2018 Communications Network

Subject: SME Visits Programme for ECHA staff, volunteering enterprises

Dear colleague,

As a new element of the Agency's training programme for the professional development of its staff, ECHA intends to launch an "SME visits programme" which has the purpose of providing a "real life" experience to ECHA personnel by "embedding" them in small and medium-size companies having duties under the European Union's chemicals safety legislation (i.e., the BPR, CLP and REACH Regulations).

As you know, ECHA is undertaking various efforts to further improve its regulatory support, its IT tools as well as its communication with such companies. On the one hand, ECHA is soliciting feedback from respective companies and their representative associations by various means, including focal group meetings, to get a clear grasp of their needs. On the other, the Agency is seeking to make its own staff more aware of SME concerns and needs. This is already part of our internal communications, consisting of lunchtime presentations or highlighting interviews with SMEs published in the ECHA newsletter, and of the daily press review provided to staff.

These efforts should now be complemented by a dedicated training programme which exposes staff members to the business of a small or medium-sized company in the country of the individual staff member's origin. The training programme targets staff members with little or no previous business experience. These will often be junior scientific experts handling regulatory work or other staff handling issues of relevance to SMEs. The programme foresees an induction phase prior to their actual company visit in which they will be more closely familiarised with ECHA's approach to supporting SMEs as well as a de-briefing phase in which the participant in the training programme will share experience and insights gained during the visit. As a collateral effect, this experience should also be helpful to ECHA further refining its approach to SMEs. The visits are to commence after summer 2015 and to take place mainly between September and November of this year.

The element currently missing to put this training programme into place is having access to host companies willing to welcome one of their nationals from the ranks of ECHA's staff to their premises for the duration of two days and thereby to provide them an opportunity to experience the tasks of the company in handling their chemicals safety duties from a business point of view. It is in this regard that I am seeking your help.

Could you please encourage companies known to you to indicate their interest in and availability for participating in this programme? Any such company should make their interest known to the following e-mail address: SME-Ambassador@echa.europa.eu

We will simultaneously be appealing for volunteer companies via our communication tools (ECHA e-news).

Participation will need to be entirely voluntary. We cannot offer any compensation to participating companies in return. Nonetheless, this may also be an interesting experience for them, too. I wish to point out, however, that ECHA is continuously interested in highlighting exemplary achievements of SMEs or matters of their particular interest through interviews, guest columns and articles published in the ECHA newsletter.

I would be most grateful if you could accost respective companies within the next two weeks so that ECHA can engage with interested enterprises still during the course of June.

I wish to thank you for your efforts in advance.

Yours sincerely,



Andreas Herdina
ECHA's SME Ambassador
Director of Cooperation