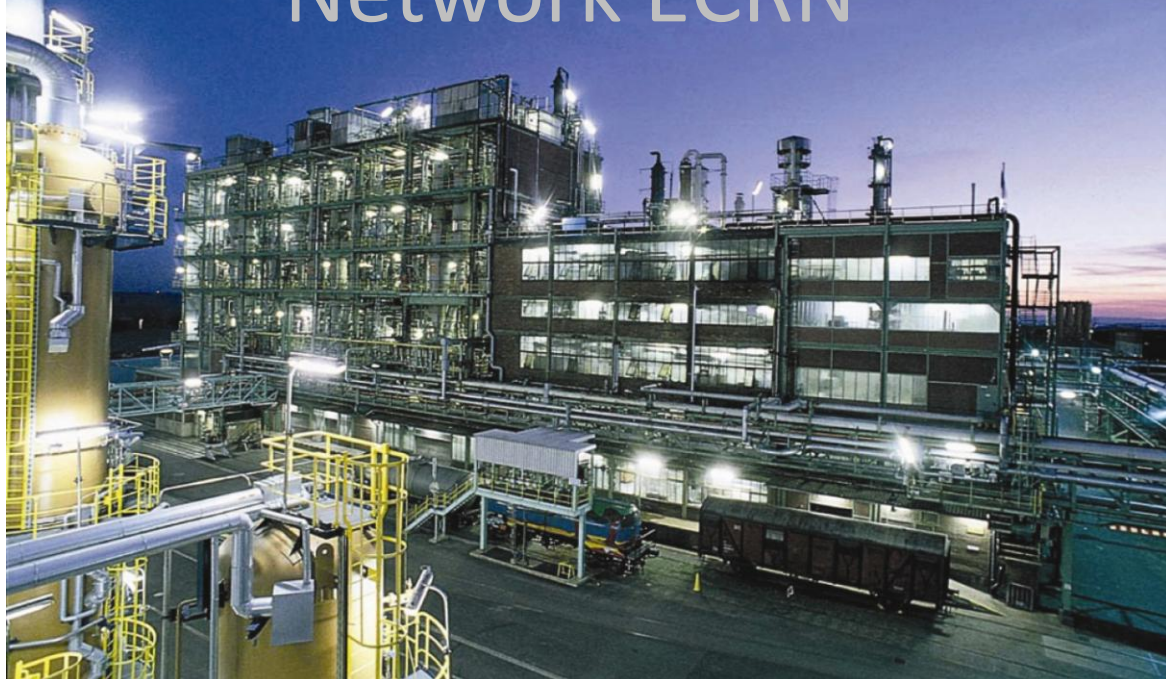




EUROPEAN CHEMICAL
REGIONS NETWORK

Annual Report 2009

European Chemical Regions Network ECRN



ECRN Network Secretariat, Boulevard St. Michel, 80, B – 1040 Brussels

Table of Contents

I. Introduction of the Director of the ECRN Network Secretariat	3
II. General information on the European Chemical Regions Network	4
III. Activities and achievements in 2009.....	5
III.1 Offering a platform for exchange of information and best practice: ECRN events in 2009	5
A. Internal meetings	5
B. Public events	7
C. Strategic Dialogues in the regions.....	9
III.2 Defending common interests: ECRN as European stakeholder for the interests of the chemical regions.....	9
A. High Level Group on Chemistry.....	9
B. Joint position papers	11
C. Parliamentary Evenings.....	11
D. ECRN participation in external events.....	12
III.3 Spreading the word: Communications in 2009	13
A. ECRN Newsletters, flyers and who-is-who	13
B. Website	14
C. Internal communications	15
ANNEX I: ECRN Member regions in 2009	16

I. Introduction of the Director of the ECRN Network Secretariat

Dear reader,

With this publication we report about our activities in the last year and highlight the major points of our work.

2009 was a challenging and eventful year for our association.

The year was framed by our contribution at the HLG and our association's core actions. Numerous events, seminars and congresses were organised by us and our partners. At these events, we presented our network, our positions and last but not least promoted our regions.

We were successful in the dissemination of the results of the High Level Group on Chemicals in which we played a respected role. Due to this, we were considered by the European Commission to co-organise the Follow-Up conference in Ústí. Our role in the chemical scene in Europe was furthermore underlined at our annual congress - which is a set point in the agendas of chemical stakeholders in Europe. We organized this 7th Congress of the European Chemical Regions together with our member region Wallonia in Liège in November 2009 under the headline "Chemical Regions- Incubators for Innovation".

Our relations to the European Parliament were another focus of our work. Our political messages and positions were transported via our Parliamentary Evenings in Brussels, which we held in February and November 2009.

Furthermore, members of the ECRN successfully applied under the association's umbrella for the Interreg project "ChemClust" which will start at the beginning of 2010.

We can summarize: 2009 was a successful and challenging year for our association and we look forward to continue our cooperation in 2010, which will be highlighted by our 8th Congress in Brussels on 7th October 2010.

We thank our active and contributing members for our cooperation in 2009 and all the efforts you put in our network.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Hack
Director of the ECRN Network Secretariat

II. General information on the European Chemical Regions Network

In order to give the chemical regions in Europe a strong voice towards European policymakers and to foster exchanges of experience and best practice on a wide range of relevant issues, the “European Chemical Regions Network” (ECRN) started as an INTERREG III C project in 2004. Two years later, the ECRN was set up as a permanent association under German law and with a network secretariat in Brussels. The aim was to further build on the added value provided by a strong joint representation of the common interests in the EU decision-making process and by working on joint solutions concerning common challenges: To raise more awareness for the regional dimension of chemicals policy with those involved in the shaping of policies in Europe, to find efficient ways to implement EU legislation, to improve the competitiveness of the chemical regions and therefore safeguard the sustainable development of chemical sites, to use new framework conditions in a most efficient way and, and to cope with changes of business structures and culture and globalization.

These overall aims were also in the focus of 2009’s activities and achievements as this report will make clear. As thematic priorities, the ECRN has decided to put a special focus on the areas of innovation, logistics and skills development as they currently are of special importance for the European chemical regions.

By the end of 2009 the network consisted of 20 member regions from 9 different European countries (see Annex I). Present ECRN President is the Minister of Economy and Labour of Saxony-Anhalt, Dr. Reiner Haseloff.

III. Activities and achievements in 2009

III.1 Offering a platform for exchange of information and best practice: ECRN events in 2009

Enabling and facilitating exchange of opinion and experience among the ECRN members and with other chemical stakeholders is an essential task of the ECRN. That is why the network also in 2009 regularly organized different events where members could easily get in touch with each other and with representatives from industry, European and national institutions, science and associations. The ECRN external events with participants from all over Europe furthermore increased even further the European-wide recognition of the network as *the* stakeholder of the regional interests in the European chemical sector.

A. Internal meetings

The ECRN looks back on four productive meetings of the **Permanent Working Group (PWG)** in 2009: On 6th February in Milano/Lombardy (host: Lombardy), on 12th June in Brussels (host: Cheshire), on 18th September in Brussels (host: ECRN-Office) and on 18th November, also in Brussels (host: North Rhine-Westphalia).

At these meetings, ECRN members were informed on recent activities and events of the network by the Director of the ECRN Secretariat according to the annual working plan, they prepared the meetings of the Executive Board and the General Assembly and discussed upcoming projects and initiatives.



*Permanent Working Group in
February 2009*

In order to enable a most effective dialogue on specific topics of special ECRN relevance, in 2009 the ECRN set up the idea of establishing **specific working groups**. Facing the vivid interest of some members in deeper engagement in area of skills, the **first working group** was set up **on skills development** and met for the first time on 17th September 2009, following a public skills meeting with external stakeholders in February (see below) and an internal skills discussion within the PWG meeting in June.

On 19th February 2009, the annual ECRN **General Assembly Meeting** took place in the Scotland House in Brussels. It was the network's most important internal event of the year, since the General Assembly decided officially on working and budget plan of the association, and on the strategic direction the network should take for the year to come. The high number of participants from all 20 ECRN member regions and the vivid contributions and comments during the meeting underlined once more the attractiveness of the ECRN network and the members' will to actively contribute to the further development and growth of the network.



*ECRN General Assembly Meeting
February 2009*



Apart from the PWG meetings and the General Assembly, meetings of the **ECRN Executive Board** took place in April and November (16th April and 6th November). Among the decisions taken by the Board was the final adoption of two joint ECRN declarations which were then addressed to European policymakers and chemical stakeholders on the occasion of the HLG-Follow-up Conference in Ústí nad Labem in April and the 7th Congress of the European Chemical Regions in Liège in November. The declarations will be mentioned in more detail below. Furthermore, at the Executive Board meeting on 6th November in Liège, not only the approval of a latest funding application project could be announced, in which many ECRN members are involved, but ECRN President Dr. Reiner Haseloff also informed the Board members on the official application for ECRN membership of a new chemical region. After having gone through the approval procedure, the ECRN will probably welcome its 21st member at the beginning of 2010.



*Executive Board Meeting in Ústí,
April 2009*

Apart from the meetings mentioned above, also **bilateral meetings** between the ECRN Secretariat and individual member regions regularly took place over the year in Brussels and in the regions. In these bilateral meetings specific needs and strategies of the regions could be addressed in a more informal and individual way and the results be presented at the PWG meetings.

Summarizing the different internal ECRN events of 2009, it can be said that through the regular personal contacts, the exchange of experience and the joint development of strategic priorities and projects on the basis of these meetings, in 2009 ECRN members have developed even closer ties with each other and thereby put the cooperation within the network on even an higher level.

B. Public events

The most important public ECRN event in the first half of the year 2009 was the **Follow-up Conference to the High Level Group on the Chemical Industry**, which took place in April and which will be presented in more detail under the item “High Level Group” below.

Referring to the fact that skills is one of the three priority issues for the ECRN, in February, the ECRN organized a **stakeholder meeting for the area of skills development and lifelong learning**. Representatives from the European social partners, industry and the chemical regions met in Brussels to discuss possibilities for cooperation in the field of skills development. This meeting set the basis for an (internal) follow-up meeting on skills in June and the first meeting of an ECRN skills working group in September, as mentioned above.

Innovation being another very important focus of the network’s activities, in the second half of 2009 two important public events were devoted to this topic: The first innovation event took place in September, when ECRN in cooperation with member region Catalonia and Essenscia Wallonie organized a **seminar on innovation** in Brussels. Speakers and participants from regions, clusters, associations and chemical industry discussed cross innovation, innovation networks and open innovation in chemical regions. The seminar was combined with a guided tour through the exhibition project “Living Tomorrow” in Vilvoorde where innovative and sustainable ways of future life and work environments were impressively presented in order to attract young people to the field of chemicals.



ECRN Seminar on innovation in September 2009



ECRN Seminar participants at „Living Tomorrow“ exhibition center

As the highlight of the second half of the year, also the **7th Congress of the European Chemical Regions** put innovation in the main focus. The congress took place on 6th November in Liège and was co-organized with member region Wallonia. Under the heading “Chemical Regions – incubators for innovation” more than 100 chemical stakeholders from all over Europe representing regional, national and European institutions, industry, science and associations discussed in different panels with high-level speakers in what ways European regions are moving forward to implement innovative and sustainable ways to ensure competitiveness of the chemical sector. An ECRN Congress Declaration on current economic challenges was adopted and distributed among the participants, which will be mentioned in more detail below.



Michael Hack, Director of ECRN Secretariat, with Vice-President of the Walloon Government and Minister of Economy, Jean-Claude Marcourt



7th Congress of the European Chemical Regions

Taking into account the current important political and structural changes in Europe after the Parliamentary elections in June, the coming into power of the Lisbon Treaty and the new European Commission about to assume office in January 2010, in November 2009 the ECRN organized a **seminar on recent policy developments** in cooperation with member region North Rhine-Westphalia in Brussels. Two representatives from the European Parliament and from CEFIC, thus representing the political and chemical lobbyist’s point of view, presented their experiences and their expectations and activities concerning European developments in the years to come and also got actively engaged in the following debate with seminar participants.

C. Strategic Dialogues in the regions

The fostering of strategic dialogues in the member regions as a very useful mean of deepening understanding and cooperation among the different stakeholders in the individual regions has been an important focus of the ECRN's work in 2009. Following the successful examples of ECRN members North Rhine-Westphalia and Saxony-Anhalt, in September 2009 a strategic dialogue was organized for the first time in member region Asturias. In close cooperation with the ECRN Secretariat Asturian chemical stakeholders from private and public sector came together in an informal setting to discuss different topics of joint interest, with a special focus on energy issues. The meeting was considered a success by all participants.

III.2 Defending common interests: ECRN as European stakeholder for the interests of the chemical regions

A. High Level Group on Chemistry

The participation as official representative of the regional interests in the European Commission led **High Level Group (HLG) on the Competitiveness of the Chemical Industry** which existed from September 2007 until February 2009 has been a big success for the ECRN and the best proof for its European-wide recognition as an important stakeholder.¹

During the 18 months of existence of the Group the ECRN was not only actively involved in advocacy work in ad-hoc groups, Sherpa- and the official HLG-meetings (e.g. by submitting position papers on "Innovation and Human Resources", "Energy and climate package" etc.), but also made active use of the opportunity to get into intensive dialogue with the European Commission, NGOs and industry and to receive first-hand information on recent developments in the chemical sector on European level. At the beginning of 2009, the network was given the official mandate by the European Commission to organize the first Follow-up conference to the HLG in April 2009 together with member region Ústí under the patronage of the European Commission and the Czech EU Presidency – another impressive success for the European chemical regions in the European arena.

The final meeting of the HLG took place on 19th February, where a **final report** with the official conclusions of the group's work and findings and with 39 policy recommendations was adopted. In this final report - which will be the most important European document concerning the competitiveness of the chemical sector in the years to come, the ECRN was mentioned several times

¹ For exhaustive information on the High Level Group on Chemistry and all meetings and results, please visit the European Commission website under:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/chemicals/competitiveness/high-level-group/index_en.htm

as a good example for modern forms of communication and cooperation and concerning its initiative on logistics infrastructure improvements.²

Since the implementation of the 39 policy recommendations on European, national and regional level will be an essential task for all HLG participants in the years to come, the reception of the mandate to organize the **first HLG-Follow-up conference on 16th/17th April in Ústí nad Labem/** Czech Republic was a big success for the ECRN, and offered to the European chemical regions the unique opportunity to stress their interest in an effective implementation of the recommendations and to make their needs and positions heard even more clearly on the European scene.



*HLG Follow-up Conference on 16th/17th April 2009
in Ústí nad Labem/ CZ*

The latter was done among other things by the adoption and distribution of an ECRN Congress Declaration on the HLG results, which will be presented in more detail under “Joint position papers” below.

The Ústí Conference made clear the willingness of the ECRN member regions to actively contribute to the implementation of the HLG policy recommendations. Resulting from this fact, further **regional HLG-implementation conferences** were organized in several ECRN regions in the following months (e.g. North Rhine-Westphalia in April 2009, Saxony-Anhalt in July 2009, ...), where chemical stakeholders from the respective regions exchanged views and developed concepts for effective implementation of the HLG recommendations in their regions. The ECRN Secretariat strongly welcomed and supported the organization of these events.



*Regional HLG Implementation conference in
North Rhine-Westphalia in April 2009*

² High Level Group on the Competitiveness of the European Chemicals Industry – Final Report, 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/chemicals/files/final_report/hlg_final_report_july09.pdf, p. 20 and p. 42

B. Joint position papers

As in previous years also in 2009 the ECRN has adopted several joint position papers and declarations in order to communicate even more effectively key interests and positions of the European chemical regions to European policymakers.

On the occasion of the HLG-Follow-up conference in Ústí nad Labem in **April 2009**, the ECRN adopted **“A Competitiveness Agenda for a Sustainable Chemical Industry in Europe – Implementing the HLG recommendations with the chemical regions in Europe”**, in which it made clear the chemical regions’ position on the best path for the implementation of the 39 recommendations. The declaration was communicated in the following months to chemical stakeholders from all over Europe and will also in the future serve as a basis for further ECRN action in the HLG Follow-up process.

In **November 2009** the ECRN adopted a declaration with the title **“The Chemical Regions in Europe meeting the challenges of today”**, in which the member regions summarized their key positions and demands concerning the ongoing severe economic crisis towards policymakers. The November Declaration was adopted and distributed among the participants of the 7th Congress of the European chemical regions in Liège and to other European policymakers in the following months.

In the same month, the ECRN also took part in an European Commission **online consultation on innovation policy** and contributed a joint position paper to this process.

C. Parliamentary Evenings

In order to make the voice of the European chemical regions heard most effectively among European policymakers, the ECRN in 2009 was in close touch not only with the European Commission but also with Members of the European Parliament.

A first Parliamentary Evening of the European Chemical Regions took place in **February** and was hosted by member region Scotland in Brussels. In direct and informal discussions with MEPs representatives from the chemical regions had the opportunity to raise awareness among the Parliamentarians for their specific needs and situations at the time of economic crisis.



In constant dialogue in 2009: ECRN, the chemical industry and European policymakers

Facing the European Parliament elections in June, a **second MEP evening** was organized in **November 2009** in order to get in touch with the new MEPs relevant for the chemical regions and thereby build a basis of mutual understanding and goodwill for future cooperation in the coming years. The evening was organized in cooperation with member region North Rhine-Westphalia which hosted the event in its Brussels office.



Parliamentary Evening of the European Chemical Regions, February 2009, Scotland House in Brussels



Parliamentary Evening of the European Chemical Regions, November 2009, North Rhine-Westphalia Office Brussels

D. ECRN contributions to external events

The presentation of the ECRN at external events and thereby raising the network's profile was another important activity in 2009, of which the contribution of ECRN Director Michael Hack to the Europe Innova Partnering Event in Crete in September 2009 or his speech at the CHEM MED Conference in Milan in November 2009 are just two examples.



III.3 Spreading the word: Communications in 2009

A. ECRN Newsletters, flyers and who-is-who

In 2009 the ECRN regularly issued information material about its members and their activities.

Apart from the regular distribution of the general **ECRN information flyer** at many different occasions and events, two new volumes of the **ECRN Newsletter** were issued: Newsletter Volume 9 was published in April 2009 and Volume 10 was published in November 2009. Both volumes offered various ECRN member regions a very good platform to present themselves and their specific relevant projects/initiatives to a wider European public. Furthermore, the Newsletters were a very useful and catchy mean to inform and make external readers curious about the ECRN organization.

In order to offer an overview on the economic and geographic situations of the ECRN member regions and to give up-to-date contact details of representatives in the regions, the ECRN updated the **“who-is-who of the chemical regions”** and published it on its website in by the end of October. The 80-page- document gives an exhaustive insight into the ECRN regions’ general economic structures, the situation of the chemical industry more specifically, information on infrastructure, education possibilities, contact persons etc. It will help external and internal stakeholders to get to know the ECRN regions better and to get in touch with them more easily.



ECRN Flyer in 2009



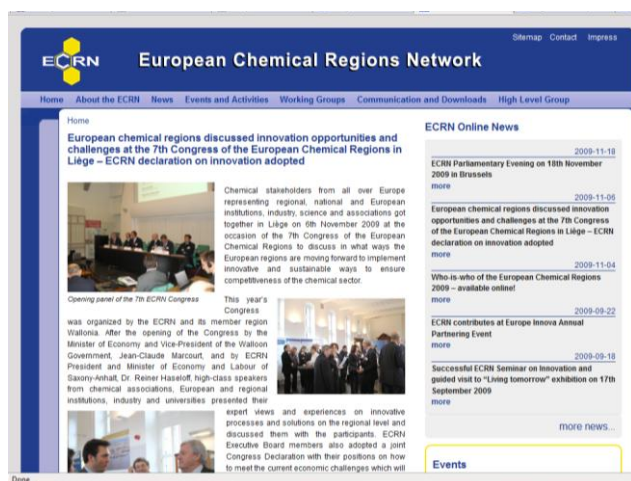
Volume 10 of the ECRN Newsletter, November 2009

B. Website

In **October 2009** the ECRN presented its **new website**, which had been newly designed and developed in the style of the layout of the ECRN Newsletter and which contains several new elements and presents relevant information in a more reader-friendly way.

One of the most important innovations in this regard was the implementation of a “best practice” section on the ECRN website. In this new section, examples of “best practice” from the ECRN member regions will from now on be presented and linked to the overall thematic category they belong to - skills, innovation or logistics. The aim of this new website section is to offer an online platform for the member regions to present their efficient solutions to different challenges to a wider public and at the same time to offer all relevant stakeholders the possibility to learn from others and their strategies most effectively.

By the end of 2009, several regions have provided the secretariat with examples of best practice already and the section will grow further in 2010.



ECRN website in new design and with new applications

C. Internal communications

Apart from the focus on external communications activities, in 2009 the ECRN also very much focused on internal communications in order to strengthen the information flow among the ECRN members: ECRN members were regularly informed on recent developments, events and other activities by **email** and by the monthly “**ECRN inside news**”, which provided the readers with latest information on ECRN events and activities, press articles of relevance, links to calls for funding etc.



December 2009 Edition of the monthly ECRN “inside news”, which is sent to the members per email

ANNEX I: ECRN Member regions in 2009

- Asturias, E
- Bavaria, D
- Catalonia, E
- Cheshire, UK
- Flanders, B
- Hesse, D
- Ida-Viru, EST
- Limburg, NL
- Lombardy, I
- Lower Saxony, D
- North Rhine-Westphalia, D
- Novara, I
- Rhineland-Palatinate, D
- Rhône-Alpes, F
- Saxony-Anhalt, D
- Schleswig-Holstein, D
- Scotland, UK
- Tees Valley, UK
- Ústí Region, CZ
- Wallonia, B

