



ECRN Joint Position

Declaration of the 2nd European Congress of Chemical Regions

05./06.02.2004, Halle/ Saale

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**PROJECT PART-FINANCED
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North East South West
INTERREG IIIC

1. Chemical Regions in Europe

Chemical regions in Europe are increasingly recognized as important participants in the development and implementation of policies for the chemical industry on site.

They often have to see to the implementation of European conditions at regional level and at the same time find practicable solutions for the enterprises concerned.

The European Network of Chemical regions has the intention to create a greater awareness for the regional dimension with those involved in the shaping of policies in Europe.

The big success of the first congress of European Chemical regions on May 21st, 2003 in Brussels, in which more than 250 representatives from more than 20 European Chemical regions took part, has made it quite clear, that there is indeed room and the need for a European network of Chemical regions.

Starting from this positive experience the chemical regions will create during the next 12 months the necessary structures and make arrangements for the network to be able to fulfil its tasks in the long run.

At the same time the European Chemical regions are asking the European Institutions to recognize this network as a "European stakeholder" for regional concerns.

2. The shaping of the future Chemicals policy in Europe

The debate on the future of the chemicals policy was an important incentive for the regions to join together closer.

In view of the proposals for a regulation submitted by the European Commission at the end of last year the European Chemical regions emphasize the principles already laid down in May 2003

- Health protection of the citizens, particularly of the workforce in Europe,
- the reduction of risks and strains for present and future ecological systems,
- safeguarding existing jobs by maintaining the competitiveness of the European economy,
- creating new jobs by improving the innovative capabilities,
- planning and legal certainty to promote investments,
- respect of ethical principles
- participatory involvement in the political decision-making and implementation process for a sustainable development capability of the sector including the regions.

The European Chemical regions welcome the fact that the European Commission has taken into consideration in its proposals of October 29, 2003 important demands, such as

- exempting polymers from registration and assessment,
- lowering the demands on intermediate products transported under strict control,
- the improvement of the protection of business secrets,
- the consideration of the special situation of chemical parks, and not to provide for an admission procedure at national level,

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- a clear reduction of the demands on the report on the safety of chemicals,
- an improvement of legal certainty by extending the number of possible remedies against decisions by the Agency, and

It is imperative for these improvements to be maintained in any further legislation procedure.

In addition, the economic effects of REACH must be checked carefully prior to the start of the legislation procedure to avoid negative effects on European industry.

However, it has to be noted that important demands both regarding the protection of the environment and health as well as to relieve the economy were not taken into account or at least not in concrete terms. What is missing is a comprehensive analysis of the existing regulations, as was mentioned by the Council of Ministers, the Parliament, and also in the common position.

For this reason it is possible that the envisaged regulation is not going to be practicable for those concerned, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises who cannot comply.

Even the authorities will have difficulties in controlling and enforcing these rules. There is no comprehensive simplification and modernisation of the complex and extensive EU law on substances and products.

The chemical regions are of the opinion that to maintain the competitiveness and to strengthen the innovative capabilities of European industry should be decisive criteria for the shaping of REACH.

Yardstick for maintaining the competitiveness of European industry when it comes to producing and processing chemical products is

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- the costs of the supply of chemicals for the final product,
- the availability of a wide offer of chemical products, and
- the time to market of new products.

The variety of chemical products is an important basis for innovation. It is maintained if the test requirements, particularly for products with a small volume are reduced to a minimum data set. For any other checks the exposition should be authoritative.

The innovative capability is further increased if REACH keeps the additional costs and the invested time at a low level.

REACH must be organized in such a way that particularly SMEs and importers can meet the requirements without bureaucratic burdens.

It must be taken into account that these requirements do not only affect the manufacturers of chemical products but also their customers, the processors in the value added chain.

For this reason the effects and feasibility of REACH should be sufficiently tested by means of concrete pilot projects involving enterprises of the value added chain and the authorities prior to the decision making in Parliament. Therefore we support the efforts undertaken by North-Rhine Westphalia to test elements of the REACH procedure in the practice and ask the European Institutions to take into account the results of this project.

In order to reduce the bureaucratic burden an analysis of all substance and product related European and national provisions should show clearly which regulations are going to be dropped or will be amended.

3. Chemical regions as knowledge regions

Both chemical enterprises as well as chemical regions are presently undergoing a phase of radical changes. The new global competitive conditions demand comprehensive modernisation strategies in the chemical regions to secure one's own competitive position in the long run.

In this process the development of an innovative environment and of human resources in the regions is of decisive importance for the positioning in the international competition between locations.

The development of competitive research potentials and their economic utilization have a major impact on growth and employment in the region.

The European Chemical regions have set themselves the objective to jointly work to further develop jointly by innovation and by creating a situation increased from which all regions can profit, due to an increased cooperation.

An essential element in this context is the cooperation initiated by the chemical regions of Saxony-Anhalt, Asturias and Lombardy in the framework of the European special programme "Knowledge based regions".

The European Chemical regions see a good opportunity in the mentoring approach contained therein to exchange experience and to come to new forms of sustainable interregional cooperation.

On this basis models for the identification and development of cooperation between advanced and disadvantaged regions shall be developed.

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Specific experience from transformation processes can be of particular importance to the organisation of branch, research and regional policy in the candidate countries. In this way they can act as a bridge in the enlargement process.

Bringing together competences of different regions in the field of restructuring of set-aside industrial surfaces and chemical parcs under special consideration of the approach for an integrative policy means an important innovative element which can contribute to improve the competitiveness of the chemical industry in Europe in a globalised market.

The network deals with subjects which are of particular importance to the future trend to innovation (e.g. financing possibilities for chemical parcs and the relation to Basel II). In this way subjects are being dealt with which did not find much attention yet. This enables a gain in new and innovative results.

The inclusion of the cooperation of chemical sites in the network of European Chemical regions ensures that the working results are passed on fast and well-targeted, thus creating new impetus in the network that can be passed on to the participating enterprises and scientific institutions.

In this way a close connection between research, regional and educational policy is created.

4. Intensification of interregional cooperation between chemical regions

Setting up a network of European Chemical regions represents an important contribution to reinforce interregional cooperation between chemical regions. Apart from the exchange of ideas and experience on questions of sustainable development of chemical regions, meetings with the partners from the economy, science, politics and administration should also be activated. The objective is to make better use of the development potential available in the various regions. At the same time it is also

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important to find ways for common solutions to meet the challenges with which the chemical regions are confronted in the framework of economic and social change.

Pressures from proposed developments in the European regulatory regime and from outside the EU, place a continuous pressure on the chemical industry itself. The European Chemical Regions' Network recognises the need to work with the industry to reduce concerns over potential job losses and company relocations as well as over over-complicated regulatory demands.

An important priority in interregional cooperation in view of EU enlargement is the development of relations with the central and Eastern European chemical regions. The development of partnerships with these regions means an important contribution to the acceleration of the adaptation process and thus to the strengthening of the competitiveness of Europe as a whole.

5. Perspectives for the network of Chemical regions

The chemical regions in Europe have the ambition for the near future to integrate all important chemical locations in Europe in the network.

This is why the network sees itself as an offer of communication and cooperation to all regional representative organisations.

In addition the chemical regions consider it to be of particular importance to develop reliable and strong relations to the institutions of the European Union, to associations and organisations of the chemical industry and the social partners, as well as to NGOs in the field of environmental and consumer protection.



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Notes for Editors:

ECRN: The “European Chemical Regions Network” has the objective to exchange experiences about the joint challenges for chemical regions and initiate a mutual learning for the strengthening of the chemical sector. Joint positions on relevant policy issues are developed to raise the regional voice in the European decision making process. The partner regions are Saxony-Anhalt as the coordinator, North Rhine Westphalia and Lower Saxony (GER), Huelva, Asturias and Catalunya (SPA), Lombardia and Piemonte (ITA), North East and North West of England (UK), Limburg (NL), Masovia (PL) and Ida-Viru (EST). Contacts to further chemical regions have been established to enlarge the network and become a stakeholder at European level. The total project budget is 1.639.000 €, 61% of which is funded by the European Union. More details about the ECRN can be found on its website at www.ecrn.net.

INTERREG IIIC is an EU-funded programme that helps Europe's regions form partnerships to work together on common projects. These projects enable regions to share knowledge and experience that will help them develop new solutions to economic, environmental and social challenges. 98 percent of all European Union regions are involved in INTERREG IIIC projects. There are more than 250 INTERREG IIIC projects running involving 2500 local and regional actors from 50 countries; 20 percent of these are from new EU Members. More information on INTERREG IIIC can be found on www.interreg3c.net.