

# Information on Chemicals

*To access relevant information on chemicals is a prerequisite for an effective protection of health and the environment.*

The Chemicals Unit of the Umweltbundesamt provides general information on chemicals, in particular regarding registration and notification procedures, classification of existing and new substances as well as it is keeping the chemical registers. In some cases, it also makes enquiries on selected substances. Its experts develop a basis for assessing chemicals and offer events concerned with chemicals.

The compliance with the chemicals legislation is ensured by the governments of the Federal Provinces – the Chemicals Inspectorates.

The Chemicals Unit of the Umweltbundesamt renders support to these regional inspectorates (e.g. inquiries and

checking of inspection results). It also initiates inspection initiatives and co-ordinates cross-provincial supervisory measures in the course of EU projects (e.g. ECLIPS). Due to the extensive know-how auxiliary material such as guides and manuals is provided.

**Under the auspices** of CLEEN (Chemicals Legislation European Enforcement Network), the chemical inspectorates of the EU Member States perform focused joint projects with the aim of following uniform procedures, fostering the information exchange and the preparation of recommendations to the EU Commission. Since 1.1.2004 the Umweltbundesamt (Chemicals Unit) and the German Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health have taken over the CLEEN-secretariat. As a result, the scope of duties of the Chemicals Department as the contact and co-ordination unit in Austria has been widened to include the co-ordination of chemicals inspection at EU level.

**Chemicals:** Present in every household



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## [www.umweltbundesamt.at/umwelt/chemikalien/](http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/umwelt/chemikalien/)

- Notification of new substances and assessment of existing substances
- Central chemicals register
- Assessment of chemicals
- Classification and labelling
- Information/Advice (national and international)
- CLEEN-secretariat



**Expert Center for Chemicals**  
Assessment and Inspection of Chemicals

# Chemicals are present in many spheres of life

*To ensure personal safety and the protection of the environment it is vital to handle chemicals carefully and to have access to relevant information.*

The Chemicals Department of the Umweltbundesamt acts as notification unit by examining submitted dossiers of new substances, it is in charge of assessing existing substances, managing the central chemicals register and developing testing methods further. In addition, it provides information and advice.

Newly developed chemicals have to be notified prior to their first placing on the

*Chemicals: Driving power of our modern world*



market. To this end, a specified set of tests has to be performed in order to identify potentially dangerous properties. The notification unit for chemicals checks the identity of a new chemical substance, examines the submitted documents and performs a risk assessment on the potentially dangerous properties and risks concerning humans and the environment. Moreover, it assesses the measures intended to be taken in case of an accident in which this new substance is involved and measures regarding its harmless disposal.

Notified substances may be placed on the markets of the member states of the European Economic Area. Hence relevant data are exchanged among EU Member States and, where applicable, commented on or objected to.

**The European Inventory** of Existing Commercial Substances EINECS contains approximately 100,000 chemical substances, which do not have to be notified. Therefore there is no obligation to conduct tests or collect data prior to placing them on the market. As a result, documentation



of these substances is not uniform and largely incomplete.

*Chemicals: Compositions of numerous substances*

**To this aim**, the European Commission has made the EU Regulation for Existing Substances, which aims at filling major information gaps. Substances are selected on the basis of priority lists in which they have been ranked according to market volumes and dangerous properties. All Member States have agreed on performing risk assessments and developing risk reduction strategies. The Chemicals Department provides the technical basis for the selection of substances and co-ordinates priority setting. In some cases it also performs risk assessments of existing substances and co-ordinates risk reduction measures at national level.

The Chemicals Department of the Umweltbundesamt manages the central chemicals register for Austria. The basis

for this register is CHEMREG, a specialised software developed by the Umweltbundesamt. The database of new substances contains about 4000 chemicals, and the databank of existing substances, IUCLID, currently comprises 10,300. Moreover about 7000 legally classified substances are capted. The Chemicals Department not only administers and updates these databases but compiles and manages data for the register of Safety Data Sheets for more than 100,000 dangerous preparations at the Austrian market.

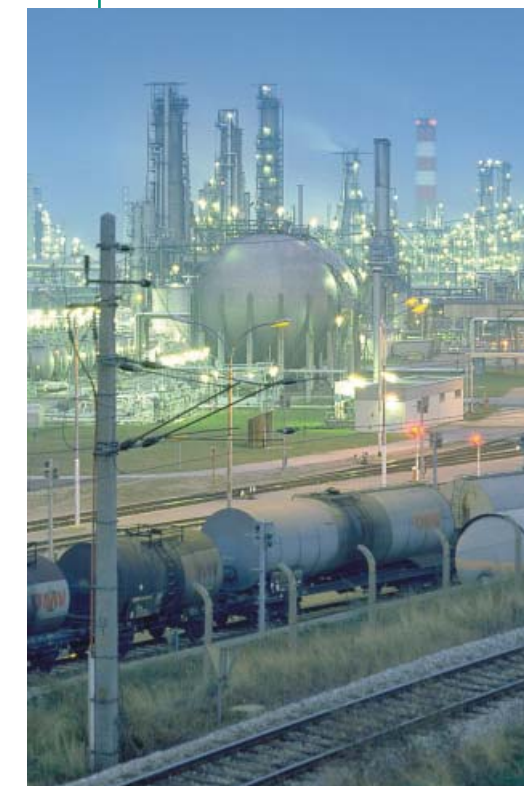
**Standardised testing methods** ensure uniform notification procedures at EU level. The EU testing methods for chemicals are largely based on the correspon-

ding OECD methods, and new developments are made primarily at OECD level. This ensures a standardised interpretation of submitted test reports by the national authorities. The Chemicals Department therefore regularly deals with the interpretation of test guidelines, co-ordinates these interpretations with the individual authorities abroad and gives advice on selected test methods.

**On the basis** of these tests and other procedures (e.g. calculation methods) the substances are allocated into categories of danger, according to specified criteria. This classification system differentiates between three types of hazards, physico-chemical hazards, hazards to humans (toxic properties) and properties dangerous to the environment. Depending on the classification of a substance, certain labelling symbols are required. They serve as a warnings for users and largely contribute to the protection of the environment and human health. For certain substances classification and labelling of dangerous substances is performed at EU level and requires an entry in the list of dangerous substances. The Chemicals Department of the Umweltbundesamt carries out classification within EU expert working groups of the Member States as well as developing classification/labelling criteria at EU level and assesses the appropriate labelling for chemical substances and preparations.

The Chemicals Unit supports, like many other units of the Umweltbundesamt, the authorities of Central and Eastern Eu-

*Chemicals: Risk assessments for humans and the environment*



ropean Countries in their preparation for their EU accession through twinning projects. As a consequence, know-how transfer is carried out by supporting them in building relevant administration systems on the one hand, and in implementing EU legislation in the individual national legislation on the other hand.

In Slovenia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Malta, Bulgaria and Romania this practical support provides the ground for long-term co-operations.