



RAISING AWARENESS

A united approach to legislative compliance and improvement. By Michael Schäfer, MCEC.

The Microbial Control Executive Council (MCEC) is an organisation made up of six of the world's leading companies developing microbial control technologies.

The European chemicals legislation is often regarded as the most ambitious in the world. This legislation, including REACH, Classification, Labeling and Packaging Regulation and the Biocidal Product Regulation, was introduced with the aim of ensuring the highest level of protection possible to the environment and human health. Since its introduction, this legislation has placed restrictions on what the chemicals industry can supply to the marketplace. Despite the legal requirements for the industry to adhere to these measures, ensuring human and environmental safety has always been a core belief and practice of the Microbial Control Executive Council's member companies.

The Microbial Control Executive Council, or MCEC, is an organisation made up of six of the world's leading companies developing microbial control technologies: Lanxess, Troy, Lonza, Dow, BASF, and ICL. The group was established with the aim of communicating the societal benefits, safe handling, and use of antimicrobial technologies. The MCEC stands together to promote to meet and uphold the regulatory requirements set out by EU chemical authorities, as well as to contribute to the debate around chemicals legislation.

Biocidal active substances and biocidal products are defined as products that exert a controlling effect on harmful organisms. This

definition is broad in scope, and includes the extermination, rendering harmless, or prevention of harmful organisms. The BPR takes a two-pronged approach with regard to biocides: first, biocidal active ingredients must undergo an approval process; and second, biocidal products including approved active substances are submitted to an authorisation process. The approval process consists of a peer review/risk assessment that, when completed and approved, signals that the European Commission has confirmed the substance in question is sufficiently safe and effective and can be used on the EU market. Additionally, the authorisation process requires the biocidal product to be authorised by either the EU or a Member State Competent Authority in which it will be used.

COMPLYING WITH LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The MCEC seeks to inform its stakeholders on how to best comply with these legislative requirements. It is the role of the MCEC not only to promote and support the introduction of improved regulations that ensure the safety of the environment and human health, but also to maintain high quality paints, coatings and all other materials in which antimicrobials are used. The MCEC aims to raise awareness of the work carried out by the industry and the lengths it must go to ensure the high quality of biocidal applications. The expensive and time-consuming nature of investing in the creation of a new active substance can often be overlooked. Biocide producers are exposed to significant



THE MCEC

CHAIR
Michael Schäfer (Lanxess)

SUBSTANCES
Microbial control products and technologies

MEMBERSHIP
6 Members:
BASF (DE), Dow (US), ICL-IP (IL), Lanxess (DE), Lonza (UK), Troy (US)

OBJECTIVES
Public outreach and communication programme to support and improve the public knowledge about microbial control products and technologies and their use and benefits.


For more information:
www.microbial-control.com

“The availability of effective chemicals is dwindling.”

years, a debate has emerged over a hazard vs risk based approach employed by different policymakers across the EU without truly reflecting on the benefits brought by such products. This has led to non-approval decisions being made on reasons based on purely intrinsic properties but not taking the negligible real risk for humans or the environment into account. With this in mind, the MCEC has made it its mission to provide accurate and up to date information to policymakers in an attempt to focus on the key facts. The MCEC is active in communicating on the added value of biocides through events and online engagement. The organisation provides comprehensive and convenient information on how microbial control helps us to create a healthier and safer environment, and details how microbial control improves our world through a wide range of industries and sectors, e.g., disease and infection control, marine shipping, paints & coatings, wastewater management or oil and gas recovery.

COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND SAFETY

The aim of the BPR is to provide an unrivalled degree of protection for humans and the environment. Considering this, the appropriate development, technological advancement and sustainable use of microbial control technologies have been at the heart of the MCEC members' commitment to health and safety, as well as the betterment of society. It is therefore the goal of MCEC members to ensure that all necessary precautions are followed to guarantee the risk to humans and the environment is minimal.

MCEC members consistently subject their antimicrobial technologies to stringent research and testing. However, due to the often burdensome nature of chemicals regulation, it has become difficult for biocide producing companies to justify investing in the innovation of new active substances. This is a problematic trend because without the continued production of high quality biocides, alongside the continued removal from the market of existing biocides as a result of EU legislation, the availability of effective chemicals is dwindling. As a result of this trend, we are facing the problem of having low quality materials at our disposal. This may result in the deterioration of paints and coatings on a number of different applications, ultimately leading to increased waste and products being landfilled or incinerated. Antimicrobial technologies are part of the solution to the development of a sustainable and greener economy. Biocides help manage energy costs, reduce waste by increasing the durability of products and also help keep the EU's citizens safe. The MCEC encourages policymakers to take a holistic approach to regulating biocides and welcomes an open discussion with authorities about the challenges ahead. 

economic and competitive risks when they enter into the process of innovating new products. Given the system of EU chemicals legislation, companies run the risk of entering into a lengthy and expensive innovation process without any guarantee that their new product will pass the severe scrutiny of the approval process in the future.

There are many challenges facing the biocides industry, including the barriers to investing in new and innovative antimicrobial solutions. Biocide producers often face high costs from long development and review timeframes. Additionally, there is growing uncertainty on what applications will be approved, driven by often overly conservative risk assessment models and constantly moving and developing guidance. These factors act as significant barriers to the development of new active substances, which means for society there will be fewer alternatives in this market moving forward. As only one third of biocides on the market have been evaluated, and with the other two thirds still under evaluation, there is a significant risk of non-approval as the legislation develops and is amended through technical progress, as well as threats of future changes in legislation. This could lead to significant societal problems as many existing biocides may be removed from the market without the availability of well-functioning substitutes.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF BIOCIDES

Given the length of the application process and the considerable costs involved, the MCEC fulfils the role of informing policymakers, industry players and the scientific community of the benefits antimicrobial technologies bring to society. The MCEC believes that an overall understanding of the importance of biocides, and the subsequent benefits brought to our everyday lives, needs to be taken into consideration when dealing with antimicrobial technologies. In recent



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