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Notifications from EU companies to export certain hazardous chemicals outside the Union have continued to steadily rise over the last three years. More than 10 000 notifications were processed in 2019 – an increase of around 35 % compared to 2016. With the increased workload, adequate resourcing is a necessity for future PIC work.

Helsinki, 31 August 2020 – ECHA's second report on the operation of the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Regulation shows that the regulatory actions taken in the EU to severely restrict the use of several hazardous chemicals has expanded the export notification obligations and resulted in a record number of 10 703 notifications being processed in 2019.

The workload of the Agency has consequently continued to increase during the three-year period from 2017-19. In addition to the processing of the export notifications, in 2019, the number of requests for support from EU and non-EU designated national authorities has grown by 72 % and the number of helpdesk questions from exporting and importing countries by 25 % compared to those in 2016.

ECHA has produced several guidelines to help EU companies understand their obligations under PIC. The Agency has also continued to support the European Commission on Rotterdam Convention activities – helping with substance identification activities, preparing 30 notifications of final regulatory actions taken in the EU to severely restrict the use of chemicals, and taking part in various communication and capacity-building projects.

The amount of staffing and budget available for PIC activities has, however, not increased proportionally, with the Agency needing to manage the higher workload with similar resources.

Bjorn Hansen, ECHA's Executive Director says: "Despite all of our achievements, the continued increase in our workload is a concern. It is crucial that we have adequate staffing and enough budget in place to carry out our tasks and ensure that international trade of very hazardous chemicals remains informed and transparent, and that the environment and the health of those outside of the EU's borders is also protected."

The report proposes ways to improve the implementation of PIC by clarifying the legal text and adapting practices. It also identifies some areas where further EU investment – including a deeper involvement of ECHA – could lead

to a higher impact of the regulation and contribute even more to the objectives of the Rotterdam Convention.

Background

The Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Regulation governs the export and import of certain hazardous chemicals between the EU and non-EU countries. It places obligations mainly on companies that want to export these chemicals to non-EU countries.

Within the EU, the regulation implements the Rotterdam Convention on the prior informed procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade.

This report is the European Chemicals Agency's second on the operation of the PIC Regulation, for the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019, under Article 22 of the PIC Regulation.