



Priority sector:
Environmental Protection and Management

EEA GRANTS 2009-14

Reduction of Hazardous Substances

The EEA Financial Mechanism shall contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area, and to strengthening the bilateral relations between the EEA EFTA States – Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway – and the Beneficiary States. The programme area shall contribute to these two overall objectives.

Objective

Prevent injury and adverse environmental effects caused by chemicals and hazardous waste

Expected outcomes

- Strengthened capacity to enforce and implement EU chemicals and hazardous waste legislation
- Increased industry compliance with EU chemicals and hazardous waste legislation
- Developed strategies for authorities' management of hazardous waste
- Improved monitoring of hazardous substances in the environment
- Hazardous waste managed in an environmentally sound manner
- Increased awareness of and education in hazardous substances

Relevance of support

Chemicals are everywhere, and are an essential component of our daily lives. At the same time, some chemicals can severely damage our health. Others could be dangerous if not properly used or handled. There is a worrying increase in health problems that can be partially explained by the use of chemicals. Some man-made chemicals are found in the most remote places in the environment, and also in animals and humans. It is necessary to balance society's need for chemicals with the need to ensure a high level of protection of human health and the environment. In the EU, the production of toxic chemicals has increased at almost the same rate as total chemical production, and both have grown faster than GDP.

Hazardous wastes represent a serious threat to the environment if not disposed of or treated in a sustainable manner. An increasing number of waste types are being classified as hazardous and regulated within the EU. Illegal disposal of hazardous wastes is an important source of soil and water pollution.

Reduction of hazardous substances is a priority area in both the EU and EEA EFTA States. The adoption of the EU's REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) Regulation obliges industry to document the properties of the chemicals that they place on the market. REACH (Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006) also contains risk management tools allowing the EU to avoid risks from the substances of highest concern to human health and the environment.

Hazardous wastes pose a greater risk to the environment and human health than non-hazardous wastes and thus require a stricter control regime. This is laid down in Directive 91/689/EEC, which sets out requirements in relation to record keeping, monitoring and control obligations "from cradle to grave". Another important element of the regulatory framework in relation to hazardous waste is the Waste Directive (Directive 2006/12/EC).

In order to minimise chemical risk, a major effort is needed to strengthen the national capacity for chemicals management, at a

government level, in industry and for NGOs. A systematic approach to identifying hazards and risks, assessments of less hazardous alternatives, and disseminating and communicating this information through the product chain will require focused efforts to achieve better management of chemicals. Cooperation at government level and sharing experiences in the regulatory field are necessary to secure efficient regulation.

Suggested activities

- Measures to strengthen national capacity for control and enforcement of chemical regulations
- Measures for sharing experiences in the regulatory field
- Measures for sharing experiences in assisting industry, especially the national REACH help-desks
- Industry initiatives, inter alia, the sharing of best practice
- Monitoring of chemicals in the environment
- Measures to strengthen national capacity for control and enforcement of regulations related to hazardous waste
- Development of national strategies for management of hazardous wastes, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders
- Measures to identify and prioritise fractions of hazardous waste that represent specific challenges to the environment
- Pilot projects in environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes
- Measures to increase awareness of and education in hazardous substances

Reduce economic and social disparities
Strengthen bilateral relations