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The earth does not conceal metals in her depths because she does not wish that men should dig them out, but because provident and sagacious nature has appointed for each thing its place.

Georgius Agricola

EUROPEAN METALS CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT NEWS

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Investigation at ECHA: The REACH Affair - Episode 5

Previous episodes: our investigator has been tasked in finding a document containing the latest REACH revision proposal prepared by the Commission that has vanished from the meeting room where it had been left for analysis by Dr Sharon McOsh and her colleagues. Our investigator has found a list of persons who attended a meeting on REACH the day before the theft (KvdJ, MO, MW, PdS, RS, SMO, TS, and X) and decides to question them. After having met Rob Straciatella and Pierre du Sable, she comes across Klara van de Jong and Triina Soren discussing the fate of the Member States Committee in Klara's office. Back in the corridor, puzzled by the lack of reply to her questions, she bumps into Mirena Orlandi, who is much more worried in finding additional SEAC experts than by a potential REACH revision. When she tries to help her, our investigator is called to order by Dr McOsh.

Dr McOsh straightened the red glasses on her nose and turned on her heels. I decided to go back to the canteen to reflect on all the clues I had assembled, both in the meeting room and along my encounters with six of the eight participants in the REACH meeting. Could I exclude some of them from a list of possible suspects? Also, how to identify and meet the two remaining ones?

It was lunch time and the canteen echoed from the sounds of ECHA's employees' conversations. I decided to take a bit of the soup of the day, from which a first sampling made me conclude it was of 'unknown and probably very variable composition'. Looking up from my plate to check if my judgment was shared or too "worst case", my eye fell upon one of the screens displaying the upcoming events in ECHA. There was an invite for a fireside chat with Miguel Waphut on the theme: "To regulate or to regulate? How to strengthen REACH?" at 13:00. I therefore skipped the coffee to go to the meeting room on the upper floor where the debate would take place; but pushed by an intuition, I once again entered the Voima room. I realised that excited by the finding of the sheet with signatures on the RAC chair's seat, I had not correctly looked around the meeting room. There could have been other indications, hopefully not yet removed by the cleaning personnel. And yes, behind the bin, I found a small ball of paper which I unfolded. Apparently one of those messages that we pass between ourselves when we don't want to make a public comment. The text written in grey pencil said: "It is always the same tactic. When presented with the agenda, X accepts everything and then kindly asks to add an AOB. And during the AOB that arrives when everyone wants to leave, X pushes for decisions for which we are not prepared. Enough...". I added the paper to my series of clues and decided that after the chat with Miguel Waphut, I would make an Excel with all the available lines of evidence, trying to find associations between evidence clues and names.

But as time is pressing, maybe you can already help me with this? I gave it a start

Clue	SMO	RS	PdS	KvdJ	TS	MW	X
White-grey hair in meeting room							
Trace of correction fluid on one of the tables							
Grey pencil on the floor, chewed at its end							
Glimpse of fair hair in the Voima room							
Calculation of environmental footprint							
RMOA reflex boxing ball							
Discussion on fate of MSC							
New endpoints							
Workability of ECHA Committees							
Concern of TiO2 in correction fluid							
Further strengthening REACH							
Use AOBs to push for unprepared decisions							

Thanks

Violaine Verougstraete

COMMUNICATION

Be it April Fool's Day, Poisson d'Avril, Pesce d'Aprile ... on the 1st of April every year, millions of people relish in the opportunity to pull harmless pranks and practical jokes.

Though this Day is widely celebrated throughout the world -in some countries on a different date e.g., "Día de los Santos Inocentes" in Spain & Latin America on 28 December- historians haven't yet pinned down a definitive date or time for its emergence. Though it's clear the holiday has existed in some form since at least the 1500s, competing theories attribute the holiday to medieval England or more modern France. Others insist the holiday is rooted in even older celebrations of spring in ancient Rome and elsewhere. Here's why the holiday remains a merry mystery despite competing theories on its origins.

So, to play our harmless prank, we chose the French version of "Fish" and wonder if you spotted the 14 different species that swam their way into our News 😊



EU COMMISSION

CARACAL: focus on CLP

CARACAL-57 took place on 18 March in an online format and focused largely on ongoing discussions related to the 25th ATP and the Transfer Adaptation to Technical Progress (ATP). The latter aims to transfer substances already identified as Endocrine Disruptors (ED) or PBT (persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic) or vPvB (very persistent, very bioaccumulative) from REACH (SVHC) (Article 59(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006), PPPR (Plant Protection Products Regulation) (Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009,) and BPR (Biocidal Product Regulation) (Regulation (EU) No 528/2012) to Annex VI of CLP. ECHA presented an updated table, which includes additional substances meeting the legal criteria under Article 37(7) CLP and removes those for which regulatory decisions under PPPR or BPR have not yet been adopted. The proposal should be finalised in the coming weeks with a Public Consultation and a notification to the WTO in May. Further updates are expected ahead of the REACH CARACAL session taking place in-person on 1 July. Delegations and industry reiterated scientific concerns around talc and SiO₂ to be included in the 25th ATP, while ECHA confirmed that further work is still under review.

The meeting also addressed comments on strontium salts, with ECHA noting that there is no new evidence that would change RAC's conclusions (more information: Wendy Wellens and [Sophia Verbrugghe](#)).

EU AGENCIES

EUROPEAN CHEMICALS AGENCY (ECHA)

ECHA COMMITTEES

RAC-76: Plenary in Helsinki

A key highlight of the 5 days of meeting was the adoption by RAC of its opinion on the PFAS restriction. But before that, ECHA's Executive Director, Dr Sharon McGuinness came to present the new ECHA structure to RAC, which entered into play on 2 March. She explained that the main drivers behind the changes in the organisation included the expansion of ECHA's mandate in chemicals management, ECHA's strategic statement and goals to deliver, the necessity to meet the stakeholders needs and expectations (based on a survey done in 2025), the strengthening of the governance (e.g., data protection, CBI, Col..) and finally to be future-ready in a changing world driven by data. RAC finalised its debates on an 'Occupational Exposure Limit (OEL)' for oximes, establishing an exposure-risk relationship (ERR) to cover the cancer risk and recommended a non-cancer 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA) limit to protect against harm to blood and blood-forming system and olfactory epithelial degeneration.

Several generic discussions took place regarding harmonised classification and labelling activities, i.e., the wording to justify a non-classification, the designation of the target organ when applying the STOT-SE or STOT-RE classification in the case of harmful effects on blood, and finally a "CLPompilus project" launched by the RAC secretariat aiming at ensuring that RAC opinions continue to be fit for purpose and can withstand legal scrutiny by the court.

Regarding the Universal PFAS restriction, RAC discussed the updates made since the provisional agreements on the sector-specific evaluations, and with this agreed on the conclusions of all 14 sector-specific evaluations. An interesting discussion took place on the site-specific PFAS management plans proposed by the Dossier Submitter for the uses that would be derogated: RAC considered that the requirements are not sufficient to provide a significant risk reduction and added several conditions as well as recommendations for supply chain communication and information to the user(s). And just before the adoption by RAC of the overall opinion, the Rapporteurs provided a useful overview of the differences between the RAC opinion and the Dossier Submitter proposal. The ball is now in the SEAC court (see below).

Concluding with good news: RAC discussed the experience of the 1-year trial on Experts of Regular Stakeholders in person attendance for CLH dossiers only (as introduced at RAC-72) and supported the extension of this trial for another year for CLH and to extend it also to the OEL process. After this period, the Chair will report on the learnings and on possible ways forward (possible extension to other processes) (more information: [Violaine Verougstraete](#)).

SEAC-70: U-PFAS restriction, all draft opinions are being finalised

On the universal PFAS restriction, SEAC had final discussions on the sectorial reviews (14 industry sectors + PFAS manufacturing) and the general aspects of the proposal. Only minor changes had been made to the sectorial reviews since previous discussions. The general aspects required more discussion but there were few contentious issues and SEAC was able to complete its debate in good time – marking the end of a rather lengthy and very resource-intensive process.

Overall, SEAC considers the proposed restriction (a ban with use-specific derogations) to be the most appropriate Union-wide measure to address risks while balancing socio-economic benefits and costs. SEAC does not agree or cannot conclude on all the specific elements proposed by the Dossier Submitter and cannot conclude on the proportionality of the additional risk management measures recommended by the Risk Assessment Committee for derogated uses – all because uncertainties are “overall substantial”.

Final editing of the draft opinions has since been done and the SEAC Public Consultation has now started and runs for 60 days until 25 May as detailed [here](#). It is open to all interested parties, including industry representatives, non-governmental organisations, producers and developers of alternatives, researchers and members of the public. It is important that all relevant stakeholders participate and submit any new information (no red herrings) on: costs and impacts (including additional risk management measures proposed); alternatives to PFAS; uncertainties in general. This is the final opportunity to gather new information to help address uncertainties (more information: [Simon Cook](#)).

RAC-76: DWD Working Group meeting

The Risk Assessment Committee (RAC) for the Drinking Water Directive (DWD) Working Group met on 11 and 12 March 2026. The meeting focused on preparing for upcoming RAC tasks (application to EUPL opinions). The group adopted the agenda and addressed action points from previous meetings, including discussions on the necessity of accreditation and validation for analytical methods. The group received further explanations about the A-listing process, which serves as a fast-track approach for reaching agreements on straightforward draft opinions. ECHA introduced the 2026 training plan, emphasising hands-on experience with mock dossiers and the use of the IUCLID software. It was noted that many members currently require additional training to navigate the system effectively. The group reviewed progress against the roadmap for various RAC checklists, including those for nanoforms, metallic materials, organic materials, and toxicological data. Updates were provided on the DWD notification of intention process, noting that 33 notifications had been submitted. The group also discussed the challenges of prioritising future applications, given the committee's limited capacity. A detailed walkthrough of the first mock dossier for a lead-free metallic composition was conducted, covering substance identity, intended uses, and migration assessment. During this review, members raised technical points regarding decimal accuracy in composition reporting, the availability of test reports and justification for allocation factors used to calculate the maximum total concentration at the tap.

The meeting concluded with a demonstration of IUCLID, an overview of upcoming hybrid events for stakeholders and the adoption of the working group report (more information: [Lara Van de Merckt](#)).

SEAC-70: chromates authorisation and restriction

The flow of Authorisation for Application (AfA) cases for chromates continues but is expected to stop in 2026 due to the forthcoming restriction.

There was a third (difficult) discussion on the SEAC draft opinion on the proposed restriction of certain Cr(VI) substances. SEAC continued to flounder on whether the proposed restriction under REACH is the most appropriate risk management option. SEAC members again referenced other options e.g., revisiting Authorisation;

combining an OEL under OSH with a restriction on environmental releases - but any comparison with what is proposed is not possible due to the narrow mandate given to ECHA by the Commission. Consensus of “cannot conclude” was starting to emerge supported by the more vocal SEAC members, applying learnings from previous cases. The discussion then moved onto other aspects of the draft opinion where industry intervened on the proposed transition period (TP) of 18 months – pointing out very clearly that this neither gives companies impacted sufficient time to substitute nor sufficient time to invest in engineering controls that may be required to reduce worker exposure and/or emissions to the environment. These comments were welcomed by SEAC members (more information: [Simon Cook](#)).

ECHA OTHERS

ECHA Management Board

European Metals participated in the industry call aiming at preparing the ECHA Management Board on 26-27 March. Whilst the participants agreed to have Cefic make a high-level comment on industry’s consideration in the ongoing ECHA dynamics, European Metals also asked to support this with factual examples coming from the documents circulated to the Management Board ahead of the call (more information: [Violaine Verougstraete](#)).

ECHA Industry Platform: meeting

After launching the Industry Platform in December, ECHA convened a meeting of the Industry User Portal to present its recent advancements developed to meet the Drinking Water Directive requirements. During the meeting, as quick as a sailfish, ECHA anticipated on the forthcoming REACH-IT submission flow. During the session, ECHA provided an overview along with mock-ups of the planned developments, outlining process mapping and key milestones for the Portal. Emphasis was placed on efforts to streamline communication by improving the display of messages and tasks within the Portal, thus anticipating & addressing industry’s concerns about the high volume of REACH-IT notifications typically received daily. EM will circulate the detailed presentation to the Registration Compliance Taskforce and prepare consolidated feedback for ECHA (more information: [Federica Iaccino](#)).

ECHA Endocrine Disruptors Workshop: 16-17 June

ECHA is organising an ED capacity building virtual workshop for stakeholders on 16-17 June 2026. The focus of this workshop will be on classification (not the ED information requirements) and aims at discussing the applicability issues of the ED classification. By June, ECHA will have organised 3 other capacity-building workshops, but those will be targeting authorities and RAC only. Recordings or a summary record of these workshops will become available. The agenda of the June workshop will depend on the input of stakeholders and Cefic, CropLife and European Metals were asked to collect cases/topics for presentation and check for possible overlaps or synergies to compile a list to be submitted by 20 March. The Environment and Human Health Taskforces made several helpful suggestions for metal-generic topics and specific cases, which were compiled with the inputs of the two other RAC industry regular stakeholders and IFRA into one list of themes that could be addressed. A follow-up call with ECHA took place on 31 March: they have received a high number of expressions of interest to present, from both industry and NGOs and some further (cooperation) work is needed to focus on the presentation items. They would also welcome asap the questions we would like to see addressed. Thanks to those who already shared their ED-CLP questions – a compilation will be prepared asap (more information: [Violaine Verougstraete](#)).

EUROPEAN METALS CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT

Chemicals Management Spring Week: Regulatory Forum

This year’s Chemicals Management Week, which kicked off with the Regulatory Forum, offered two days of substantial exchanges across many of the most prominent regulatory files currently shaping chemicals policy. The programme opened with Water Europe outlining ongoing work on EU water policy and the new Water Resilience Strategy, highlighting both the opportunities and implementation challenges across the water legislative framework. This was followed by an update from ECHA on improvements to ECHA CHEM and the development of the One Sudis One Assessment (OSO) data architecture, and a presentation from DUCC providing the downstream users’ perspective on priorities for future chemicals policy. European Metals then presented the latest state-of-play on the REACH revision, which was complemented by input from DG RTD on the Commission’s

continued work to operationalise Safe & Sustainable by Design (SSbD) and integrate it into wider innovation pathways.

The second day started with IAM-I's overview of advanced materials, their governance structure, and the relevance of Critical Raw Materials (CRMs) across innovation ecosystems. This was followed by OECD's update on the activities of the Global PFAS Group and the upcoming work on remediation approaches. The agenda then moved through updates from DG ENV on the Zero Pollution Action Plan's (ZPAP) mid-term review, from Recharge on developments related to batteries, and from the European Environmental Bureau on the emerging 'Made with EU' sustainable procurement criteria. Taken together, the presentations of this second day provided a comprehensive picture of international, EU-level and sector-specific regulatory developments intersecting with chemicals management.

We warmly thank our excellent Chairs: Lisa Allen and Brian Abrams, for guiding the Forum with clarity and enthusiasm and extend our appreciation to all speakers for their high-quality contributions. The strong engagement from the audience, reflected in rich Q&A exchanges and thoughtful interventions, once again underscored the value of this forum as a space for shared learning and collaboration across the chemicals management community. Draft minutes will be circulated asap (more information: [Andrea Pellini](#) and [Sophia Verbrugghe](#)).

Chemicals Management Spring Week: Science Forum

Building further on the dynamism of the Regulatory Forum, the Science Forum started its discussions with the essential OEL tour, which brought the participants up to date with the latest Occupational Safety Health (OSH) developments. This was followed by a refreshing presentation on the Specific Emission Release Categories. SpERCs have been used in the context of the REACH registrations when measured data was not available, but are now also discussed for restrictions, as they entail less conservatism defaults than the ECHA default ERCs.

The audience then dived into lifecycle considerations with a presentation on the update of metal human toxicity effect data in the Lifecycle Assessment (LCA) USEtox model and a dynamic duet talk on the LCA mapping in EU policies, its technical challenges & opportunities. The first afternoon ended with a presentation on the activities of the Particles Platform, nicely circling back to the OEL. The day concluded with a guided tour to discover some wonderful Art Nouveau/Art Deco houses in the Chatelain neighbourhood, and burgers to recover!

The next morning, JRC entertained the participants on the new Soil Monitoring Law's Indicative List, its objectives and implementation. Stijn Baken (now VITO) explained the importance of FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) data in the context of the PARC project and the OSOA database, whilst also highlighting the opportunities for industry. This was followed by a discussion on the deliverables and next steps of the updated environmental classification fact sheets (MERAG) and a welcomed presentation on the skills needs and workforce challenges faced by energy-intensive industries. This concluded the spring edition of the CM week, and we did not see the time passing by. This is undoubtedly linked to the quality of the speakers but also to the very efficient and warm chairing of the Science Forum. Thanks a lot Irene (Cañas Sierra) and Steven (Verberckmoes) for your help. And a special thanks here to Ailsa for her excellent support for the catering and Social Event. Draft minutes will be circulated asap (more information: [Violaine Verougstraete](#) and [Lara Van de Merckt](#)).



ZERO POLLUTION AMBITION

Safe & Sustainable by Design (SSbD): 6th STO Event

This European Commission event took place on 19 March in the Albert Borschette Conference Centre (CCAB), Brussels. European Metals attended the conference in person, to hear the updates and to better understand the perspectives of various stakeholder groups. The meeting was well-attended with 120 sardines in the room, 280 following by Webex and an unknown number of people following by live streaming. There were presentations from the Commission followed by panel discussions involving different stakeholders.

The purpose of the conference was to discuss the revised SSbD [framework](#) adopted by the Commission on 6 March, and to hear Commission updates on their plans for a network of chemicals innovation and substitution hubs.

The Commission believes they have done a good job of addressing stakeholder concerns on burden of SSbD with the revision, to be finished with an updated guidance on how to apply SSbD expected in April 2026. SSbD will remain a voluntary approach but helps companies to anticipate future regulatory requirements. Companies support the aspirations of SSbD, to give guidance on innovation from an early stage in the process by taking a holistic view of safety and sustainability. The revised network is an improvement, but clarity is still lacking and there are still concerns about overall burden, resources required, and costs. Sharing of information between value chain actors is also a major concern. Companies see business risks in collective innovation projects – possible loss of intellectual property (IP), issues with sharing confidential business information (CBI), possibility of falling foul of competition law.

Rather than addressing these two significant roadblocks (which have been raised by stakeholders on several occasions and again during the meeting), the Commission is moving ahead with the creation of a network of innovation and substitution hubs which will apply SSbD. Hubs are aimed at small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with the goal of supporting them in their innovation activities. There are substitution test cases running in three sectors – PFAS in batteries, hard chrome plating, brominated flame retardants (more information: [Simon Cook](#)).

REGISTRATION

Registration Compliance Taskforce: *meeting 19.03.2026*

The first meeting of the year brought together participants to discuss a wide range of ongoing activities, including developments on exchanges with ECHA on data dissemination and registration, the Member State Committee (MSC), and Board of Appeal (BoA) meetings. The Taskforce exchanged updates on ECHA CHEM and the Classification Inventory, as well as on ECHA's anticipated progress on the One Common Platform, clearly still at its Acronurus stage. EM continues to closely follow up on exchanges with ECHA to ensure and consolidate agreements reached and reports back to the Taskforce on key learnings.

The group also addressed typical consortia challenges, such as IUCLID server possibilities, exposure scenarios beyond European requirements, and the management of complex collaborative activities. Overall, the meeting enabled a thorough and constructive exchange on best practices across consortia, highlighting shared difficulties and commonly applied procedures. The draft minutes will be circulated asap (more information: [Federica Iaccino](#)).

CLASSIFICATION

Li CLH Taskforce: *update call*

The 24th ATP to the CLP, which includes the three Li entries as toxic for the reproduction, will be undergoing a 2-month scrutiny at the European Parliament and the Council before its official publication. In the meantime, series of other Li-related activities have taken place on which the Taskforce was updated during a call on 23 March. ILiA had a meeting with the UK HSE and the UK Department for Business and Trade on 26 February to exchange further on the UK timeline for their classification proposal but also the data needs to strengthen their opinion. The Taskforce also discussed the outcomes of the French RMOA, now finalised. The conclusions of France (posted on the ECHA cod website in the [ARN section](#)) indicate that at this stage, the French authorities have not identified any new regulatory risk management measures as necessary, considering the need to first collect additional data and carry out further studies to better assess the risks of lithium. They also state that subsequent risk management measures should consider the results of such studies as well as socio-economic impacts and also include a series of recommendations that can be discussed in the context of the Manifesto that industry will draft on the basis of the Industry RMOA.

An update on the Species-Sensitive Distribution (SSD) study, but also the data collection in the context of ECaBaM and PARC concluded the call. The draft minutes were circulated on 25 March (more information: Francesco Gattiglio, Roland Chavasse, [Violaine Verougstraete](#) and [Ailsa Lee](#)).

INDUSTRIAL EMISSIONS

21st Meeting of the IED Article 13 Forum: *overview of DG ENV's ongoing projects and next steps*

The European Metals Secretariat attended the 21st Meeting of the IED Article 13 Forum (2-3 March 2026).

On the draft revised BREF Guidance, the final text of this BREF Guidance will be prepared taking into consideration the Forum's opinion and written feedback. The final text will be submitted to the vote of the IED Article 75 Committee tentatively mid-May 2026 to be adopted by 1st of July 2026.

Regarding the Draft Commission Implementing Decision (CID) on a compliance assessment method (IED Article 15a), a few associations and some Member States raised concerns regarding the draft and the deadline to provide written comments, therefore input was extended a bit (until 13 March). It will be submitted to the vote of the IED Article 75 Committee early June (tentatively) for adoption of the draft Implementing Act by 1st of September 2026. And finally, on the draft Commission Implementing Decision on INCITE arrangements (IED Article 27a), the commenting period for Article 13 Forum members is ongoing (until Wednesday 8 April 2026), followed by the submission of the final version of the draft for a vote to the Article 75 Committee and a target date for adoption by end of 2026 (tentatively).

INCITE – PFAS workshop

JRC will host a workshop dedicated to “*Innovative Techniques for the management of PFAS in sectors under the Industrial Emissions Directive*” in Seville on 5 and 6 May 2026. This hybrid event (both online and in-person participation) will be dedicated to foster dialogue, share state-of-the-art solutions, and accelerate the adoption of innovative technologies and practices to mitigate PFAS emissions across the industrial lifecycle. European Metals Secretariat will attend the workshop remotely.

Mining (extraction) of ores (MIN) BREF

On Friday 6 March 2026, EU-BRITE officially launched the data collection. The questionnaire has been provided to the Technical Working Group (TWG) members. EU-BRITE is also planning to organise a few arctogadus glacialis online sessions co-hosted by the relevant Member States and the industry associations to answer any questions operators may have to facilitate the filling in of the questionnaire. The deadline for the submissions of completed and quality-checked questionnaires is **Monday 15th of June 2026** (more information: [Andrea Pellini](#) or [Eleonora Tosi](#)).

ENV Omnibus: thank you

Thanks to the valuable comments received on the draft, European Metals has now finalised its position paper on the ENV Omnibus. Throughout April, we will carry out our advocacy activities to present our views and ensure our priorities are well reflected in the ongoing legislative process. The timing is ideal, as the Commission has just opened a new consultation period, closing on 7 May, during which European Metals will formally submit the finalised position paper (more information: [Andrea Pellini](#))

WATER

Working Group (WG) Chemicals: meeting

The Working Group Chemicals meeting took place on 16th and 17th of March in hybrid mode. The meeting began with updates from the EC staff, followed by the introduction of the new Chair from the EU Commission, who took over the proceedings. Updates were provided on the revision of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), including imminent votes, and on the upcoming targeted review. The EU Commission announced that a call for evidence for this targeted review would open shortly, in order to gather expert input. This will be published alongside a new guidance document, which highlights the existing legislative flexibilities in the WFD that Member States can apply in permitting procedures. The EU Commission and ECHA provided an overview of their upcoming work on implementing the review directive, along with timelines. Their current priorities are revising the technical guidance on deriving Environmental Quality Standards (EQSs) and setting up the new official prioritisation process (which will involve first placing substances on the Watch List and then, when relevant, prioritising them). The first preliminary list of substances to be placed on this list will be published by the end of 2026 for consultation. Guidance on the criteria for harmonising EQSs for river basins specific pollutants (RBSPs) will be produced next year.

ECHA will also soon launch a survey to gather feedback on what worked and what did not in the last prioritisation process, which will feed into their own proposed approach. The JRC presented updates on effect-based methods (EBMs) for monitoring oestrogenic effects and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) indicators, mostly focusing on the selection of relevant genes of *Salmo trutta* to monitor. DG Sante also joined the meeting to present on PFAS and TFA (restrictions, exposure routes, and risk). The meeting concluded with brief updates on related policy areas, such as the 'One Substance, One Assessment' (OSOA) initiative and the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD) (more information: [Lara Van de Merckt](#)).

The Water Framework Directive: *final vote & targeted review*

The final vote on the revised Water Framework Directive (WFD) by the EU Parliament on 26 March marks the end of the process. This means that the official adoption and publication in the Official Journal will follow soon. We can therefore expect the new text to come into force by May 2026. Member States will then have until 21 December 2027 to transpose it into national law (ahead of the next cycle of submission for river basin management plans). Given the numerous changes to be expected for this review, including priority substances and EQS limits, the addition of *Oreochromis niloticus* to ecological status assessments, harmonisation of pollutants in river basins, non-deterioration exemptions, and more, I would strongly encourage you to join our Water Taskforce to learn more! In addition, a targeted review of the WFD was announced at the end of last year to address bottlenecks in the permitting process stemming from this directive. A call for evidence was launched in March and will close on 14 April, with a dedicated strategic coordination group (SCG) meeting taking place on 16 April. The call for evidence focuses on the impact on the permitting of strategic projects (as defined in the Critical Materials Act) (more information: [Lara Van de Merckt](#)).

SOIL

Meeting of the Commission's Expert Group

The EU Commission (EC) Expert Group on the implementation of the EU Soil Strategy met on 5 March. This hybrid meeting brought together experts from Member States and stakeholders (STOs), as well as representatives from the EU Commission, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the European Environment Agency (EEA). The first part of the meeting focused on the Soil Monitoring Law (SML), its adoption and content. Member States now have three years to transpose it into national law, and the EC has been mandated to support them in its implementation by providing guidance documents on monitoring, setting criteria (e.g., limit values for metals in soil to protect species such as *Clarias gariepinus*), risk assessment, and the management of contaminated sites, as well as on setting an indicative list of soil contaminants from which Member States can select additional contaminants to those already listed in Annex B. The EC also used this meeting as an opportunity to announce that dedicated expert groups on the implementation of the SML will be set up, comprised only of Member State experts and EC/JRC/EEA representatives. STOs will be invited to provide feedback through consultations when necessary. This announcement sparked lively discussions, leading the EC to propose that the STO indicate which topics of Article 24 they can contribute to, based on their expertise. The EC will then consider how this could be integrated into their work, in collaboration with the Member States. The current EG on the implementation of the EU Soil Strategy will remain in place, holding an average of two meetings per year. The second half of the meeting focused on the deliverables and next steps of the EU Soil Strategy for 2030 (e.g., 'test your soil for fish', guidelines on soil sealing and land take, risk assessment methodologies for soil contamination guidance documents) (more information: [Lara Van de Merckt](#)).

BATTERIES

ECaBaM 4: *follow up and SoCs short list*

Following the conclusions of the ECaBaM 4 workshop, ECHA and the consultancy WSP have advanced with their work on identifying potential Substances of Concern (SoCs) in batteries. Two separate short lists have now been shared with stakeholders: one for hazard-based SoCs and one for substances hampering recycling, both screened against Article 2(27) (a–d) of the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR). These lists are not final and may still be refined, as hazardous substances do not automatically qualify as hazard-based SoCs under 2(27)(b), and WSP has acknowledged that screening errors may also occur.

The purpose of sharing these lists was to trigger a last data collection exercise on concentrations, volumes, possible alternatives for each substance in battery applications, environmental releases/emissions and exposure throughout the lifecycle for the hazard-based SoC list and to confirm agreement or disagreement of the 'hampering recycling conclusion'. Despite these lists being 'shorter' than the ones circulated in Phase 1, concerns were expressed about the challenging timeline and the amount of information requested. The tight timelines are due to the challenging timetable WSP and ECHA have to comply with. WSP is expected to deliver the full report to ECHA by September, after which ECHA will submit it to the European Commission by the end of the year. However, it was proposed to the participants to submit as much as possible by 31 March and to flag directly to WSP what could come later in terms of information (e.g., *Epigonus telescopus*).

A data validation phase will take place as well, with approximately 30 stakeholders already contacted across the value chain, including ECaBaM participants but also ECHA/Commission stakeholders. The feedback of the validation exercise will help refine uncertainties before the Commission's final assessment (more information: [Andrea Pellini](#))

TOOLS

MEED: sponsors meeting on 30 April

The next MEED sponsors meeting will take place on Thursday 30 April at 10:00, providing an opportunity to take stock of progress across the programme and budget, and to look ahead to the next steps. Discussions will cover developments in the metal-organic mixtures study, including key findings, as well as progress on mesocosm “alternatives” and the review of existing studies. An update will also be provided on the Aquadivers project, including ecosystem-relevant effects observed in Rainbow trout, alongside the latest on MEED publications and activities within SETAC. During the meeting, sponsors will be invited to contribute to a discussion on how best to communicate and position MEED outcomes across different audiences and regulatory contexts (more information: [Diana Dobre](#))

Laura’s Sustainable Corner

EU Taxonomy: Ongoing consultation on criteria revision

The EU Commission has launched a [four-week consultation](#) on the revision of the EU Taxonomy climate and environmental delegated acts. The consultation aims to gather stakeholders’ feedback to improve usability of the existing criteria and follows a series of so-called “reality check workshops” organised in 2025 to identify challenges related to EU Taxonomy implementation. As a reminder, the EU Taxonomy is a Regulation aiming to identify, through technical screening criteria, which economic activities can be considered as “sustainable”, or better “taxonomy-aligned” for investments’ purposes.

More details

As European Metals, we support the EU Taxonomy’s objective of steering capital towards sustainable activities but we highlight that criteria must be workable in practice and aligned with industrial realities.

Manufacturing of aluminium is the only non-ferrous metal currently covered in the delegated acts. For this economic activity, we stress that some aspects outside the control of the economic operators should not be included as a technical screening criteria.

One key aspect of the Regulation that we have been following and that is of broader interest to our membership is the “Appendix C” which lists requirements on pollution prevention and control regarding use and presence of chemicals, building on existing legislation and requirements but at the same time requesting additional actions to show that an operator does not “significantly harm” the environment, using the EU Taxonomy language. In this context, we have been highlighting [usability](#) issues, while recognising that the European Commission’s new proposal acknowledges the difficulties and is more pragmatic in its approach. Finally, we also highlight the need to recognise multi-metallic recycling as a key enabling activity.

Next steps

We are now in the process of analysing the new draft and updating our position, while at the same time contributing to the work of the Platform on Sustainable Finance, that will also publish an opinion on the matter (more information: [Laura Fazio Bellacchio](#)).

OUTREACH

FRDO

On 24 March European Metals attended a meeting held by the FRDO (Belgian Federal Council for Sustainable Development) to exchange on the REACH revision. During the session, stakeholders were invited to outline their key concerns and priorities, and European Metals submitted its position accordingly.

The FRDO will now prepare a draft advice based on the input received, which will be discussed in a follow-up meeting scheduled for 21 April (more information: [Sophia Verbrugghe](#)).

OTHERS

BusinessEurope: ENVI Working Group meeting

European Metals attended the latest meeting of BusinessEurope’s ENVI Working Group, which focused on the Commission’s proposal to accelerate environmental assessments and the broader implications for permitting,

competitiveness and regulatory coherence. The session included an exchange with DG ENV on the objectives and limitations of the “Speeding-up Environmental Assessments” Regulation, followed by a roundtable among industry federations on the Environment Omnibus, the Circular Economy Act and the ongoing challenges around implementation timelines. A discussion on the Water Framework Directive and upcoming pressures linked to the 2027 deadlines closed the agenda (more information: [Sophia Verbrugghe](#)).

GENERAL INFORMATION & ACRONYMS

Follow the logo and check out our Metals Gateway website.



This website is a one stop information source for regulators & risk assessors dealing with metals/metal compounds and is tailored to the specific needs of the [metals](#) industry sector. **A continuously updated** list of acronyms is available under the [Reach Metals Gateway](#) (RMG).

CALENDAR

Please find below a list of the meetings already planned for first semester 2026 (ECHA, Commission & European Metals).

For meetings at European Metals: most of our meetings will now be held as hybrid meetings, and **our members will be informed ahead of the meetings** (links to join will be sent ahead of the meetings).

For meetings at ECHA: this information is published on ECHA's [website](#)

- 23/04: Drinking Water Expert Group
 - 27-29/04: RAC-77 CLH WG
 - 30/04: MEED Sponsors meeting
 - [04-07/05: Metals Academy 5](#)
 - 05-06/05: RAC-77 DWD WG
 - 05-06/05: INCITE PFAS Workshop
 - 07-08/05: RAC-77 AfA WG
 - 26-27/05: RAC-77 REST WG
 - 01-05/06: RAC-77 Plenary
 - 01-05/06: SEAC-71
 - 08-12/06: SEAC-71
 - 08-12/06: MSC-94 – TENT
 - [09/06: Water Taskforce](#)
 - 09/06: RAC-77 (II optional - remote)
 - 15-16/06: ECHA-Industry days
 - 16-17/06: ECHA ED workshop (virtual)
 - [17/06: 5th Symposium on Materials and Products in Contact with Drinking Water](#)
 - [18/06 \(AM\): Risk Management Taskforce](#)
 - [18/06 \(PM\): Chemicals Management Steering Committee](#)
 - [23/06: OEL Workshop II](#)
 - 29/06-01/07: RAC-78 CLH WG
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