

Regional Workshop on Chemical Hazard Communication and the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) for Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia

24 - 25 October 2006
Bled, Slovenia

Final Report



REPUBLIC OF
SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF
HEALTH
NATIONAL
CHEMICALS BUREAU

The Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional GHS Workshop was the fourth in a series of regional and sub-regional GHS workshops which are co-ordinated and supported through the *UNITAR/ILO Global GHS Capacity Building Programme*, subject to availability of extra-budgetary resources. The event was also a contribution to the *WSSD Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the GHS* which was initiated at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

Special thanks are extended to the Government of Slovenia and their partners, the Government of Switzerland, the OPCW, and the European Union (TAIEX) for their financial contributions to the workshop. The first regional workshop was held for the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in September 2003, the second for the countries of Mercosur and the Andean Community in November 2004, and the third for the ASEAN region in October 2005. Countries and organizations interested in supporting GHS workshops in other regions are encouraged the contact UNITAR at the address below.

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	I
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 THE GHS: AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR PROTECTING HUMAN HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT.....	1
1.2 WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES	4
2. TECHNICAL REVIEW OF THE GHS AND IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES FOR EU AND NON-EU COUNTRIES.....	5
2.1 OPENING REMARKS	5
2.2 TECHNICAL OVERVIEW OF THE GHS.....	5
2.3 OVERVIEW OF THE GHS IN THE CONTEXT OF EU AND NON-EU COUNTRIES	6
3. SUMMARY OF WORKING GROUP DISCUSSIONS.....	9
3.1 GHS IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES FOR EU AND CANDIDATE COUNTRIES.....	9
3.2 GHS IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES FOR NON-EU COUNTRIES.....	10
4. WORKSHOP CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	10
ANNEX A: WORKSHOP AGENDA.....	11
ANNEX B: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	13
ANNEX C: LIST OF ACRONYMS	29

Executive Summary

The *Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Workshop on Chemical Hazard Communication and GHS Implementation* took place in Bled, Slovenia, 24-25 October 2006. The workshop brought together 95 representatives from 21 EU and non-EU countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as representatives of international organizations and other stakeholder groups. Additionally, participants from Brazil attended to workshop to share their experiences in national and regional GHS implementation and to learn about the capacity building needs of the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asian region. The event represents the fourth in a series of regional and sub-regional GHS workshops that are coordinated and supported through the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme.¹ It also contributed to the *WSSD Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the GHS*, which was initiated at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. The workshop was organised by the Government of Slovenia in collaboration with UNITAR/ILO, and with financial support from the Government of Switzerland, TAIEX and OPCW. Participants concluded that the workshop provided a valuable opportunity to learn about technical aspects of the GHS, discuss key issues related to regional and national implementation in a EU and non-EU context, and suggest concrete next steps in the area of chemical hazard communication and GHS implementation.

¹ The first workshop was held for the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region in September 2003, the second for the countries of Mercosur and the Andean Community in November 2004 and the third for the ASEAN region in October 2005.

1. Introduction

An important aspect of protecting human health and the environment from potentially toxic chemicals is the development of national systems that ensure that chemicals are properly classified and labelled and that safety data sheets are made available, in particular in the workplace. These communication tools provide workers, consumers and the public with important information about the hazards of chemicals (hazard communication) and thus help to trigger precautionary protective behaviour. For this to be effective, messages must be comprehensible and accompanied by appropriate supporting measures. The Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) is a new internationally-agreed tool for chemical hazard communication.

As part of the UNITAR/ILO series of regional and subregional GHS awareness raising and implementation workshops, countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia met in Bled, Slovenia, 24-25 October 2006, to discuss their experiences with chemical hazard communication and consider concrete measures related to GHS implementation in the region.

1.1 The GHS: An Important Tool for Protecting Human Health and the Environment

The GHS provides a comprehensive and universal tool for chemical classification and hazard communication, and countries around the world are taking an interest in developing national strategies for implementing the GHS and building capacities for effective chemical hazard communication. Responsibility for the maintenance, updating and promotion of the system, adopted in 2002, rests with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Subcommittee of Experts on the GHS (SCEGHS).²

Countries can draw upon the GHS to develop national chemical hazard communication systems where those infrastructures are weak or lacking, and will need to align existing regulations and procedures with the provisions of GHS. Additionally, implementation of the GHS may require strengthening, updating or establishing appropriate national legislation. The GHS is also compatible with other international instruments such as the ILO Chemicals Convention 170, Rotterdam, Basel and Stockholm Conventions, as well as the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). Global implementation of the non-binding GHS will be undertaken through a strategic yet flexible approach in Member States, through collaboration between government and other interested and affected parties such as business and industry and non-profit civil society, including labour, consumer and public interest groups across the agricultural, industrial production,

² The UNSCEGHS website can be found at: http://www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/ghs/ghs_welcome_e.html.

transport and consumer sectors.³ The GHS therefore represents an important step in harmonizing national chemical hazard communication systems worldwide and has a great potential to improve chemical safety across all relevant sectors.

Specifically, the System is expected to:

- enhance the protection of people and the environment;
- provide a recognised framework for those countries without an existing system;
- reduce the need for duplicative testing and evaluation of chemicals; and
- facilitate international trade in chemicals whose hazards have been properly assessed and identified on an international basis.

International Aspects

According to the report of the IFCS Forum III meeting held in October 2000 in Brazil, the GHS will become a practical and coherent global standard for chemical hazard communication in the workplace, for those involved in work-related activities, for the transportation system, and for consumers. Forum III specifically recommended that “all countries, subject to their capacities and capabilities, should take account of the development of the GHS in any proposed changes to existing systems for classification and labelling, and in the implementation and enforcement of their chemicals legislation”. The IFCS also recommended that guidance and other tools necessary for the implementation of the GHS be made available by 2003 and that all countries should implement the GHS as soon as possible with a view to have the system fully operational by 2008, a target endorsed at the 2002 WSSD held in Johannesburg, South Africa (WSSD Plan of Implementation, paragraph 23(c), A/CONF.199/20).

IFCS Forum IV in Bangkok, Thailand, in November 2003, adopted a GHS Action Plan – based on the workplan of the UNITAR/ILO/OECD *WSSD Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the GHS* – that encouraged, *inter alia*, “at least two regional GHS workshops held and implementation strategies prepared by the end of 2005, taking into consideration regional economic integration arrangements”.

Additionally, the importance of implementing the GHS is recognised in the Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS) of SAICM – GHS implementation is identified under the overall objective of “knowledge and information”: (h) To promote implementation of the common definitions and criteria contained in the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. GHS is also included as a SAICM work area in the Global Plan of Action, including 8 distinct

³ Use of the terms “multistakeholder” and “multisectoral” in subsequent sections of this report denote inclusion of the above mentioned stakeholders and sectors.

activities. In particular, SAICM GPA activity #250 recommends to “Make available sufficient financial and technical resources to support national and regional GHS capacity-building projects in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.” Participants at the ICCM-1 in 2006 stressed importance of training and capacity building for implementing the GHS as part of SAICM, indicating further international recognition of the importance of countries and regions moving forward to include the GHS capacity building and implementation into overall chemicals management strategies and national SAICM implementation programmes.

The GHS is an important tool that can contribute to achieving sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and facilitates the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

Challenges for Capacity Building in Developing Countries

One of the key factors that will ultimately determine the success of the GHS worldwide is the extent to which countries both recognise the potential benefits of chemical hazard communication and develop capacities to establish the necessary infrastructures to implement and operate the system. Developing countries and countries with economies in transition face particular challenges with regard to trying to limit and reduce the negative effects of chemical use in various sectors through appropriate hazard communication. Frequent mis-labelling of chemicals, a lack of understanding of labels on chemicals in use, and infrequent training in chemical safety are only some of the challenges specifically faced by countries with limited or non-existent national hazard communication infrastructures.

Widespread adoption of the GHS and effective chemical hazard communication is therefore only likely to occur if countries demonstrate a strong commitment to its implementation and if adequate support and technical assistance is made available to countries needing to build appropriate legal and technical infrastructures. Suitable training and education will be required to ensure the proper use of GHS tools in different national contexts. This will be of particular importance to those developing countries and countries with economies in transition that did not directly take part in the technical work of harmonization. Moreover, lessons learned from ongoing GHS pilot projects indicate the practical value of GHS capacity building activities for chemical safety at all levels. To date, 83 countries have already indicated to UNITAR their interest in participating in a GHS capacity development project.

1.2 Workshop Objectives

The main goal of the workshop was to bring together key representatives from government, industry and non-profit civil society to discuss GHS implementation, technical aspects of the GHS, and capacity needs in the four GHS-relevant sectors of industrial workplace, agriculture, transport and consumer products. The workshop focused on national GHS implementation among Central and Eastern European and Central Asian Countries and the elements of a possible regional GHS implementation strategy.

Specific objectives of the workshop included, *inter alia*, to:

- take stock of the status of GHS implementation at the national and regional level;
- initiate development of national GHS implementation strategies;
- examine existing regional institutions and initiatives relevant for GHS implementation;
- consider possible collaboration between EU and non-EU countries in the region in GHS implementation;
- examine and develop possible approaches to GHS implementation and identify practical ways and means regarding implementation within Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia; and
- identify the role, and consider initiating activities for industry and non-profit civil society groups (such as labour unions and NGOs) to contribute to national and regional GHS implementation activities.

2. Technical Review of the GHS and Implementation Issues for EU and non-EU Countries

This section of the report provides more detail regarding the presentations provided during the workshop.

2.1 Opening Remarks

Mr. Alojz Grabner opened the workshop on behalf of the Minister of Health of Slovenia. He noted that organising the conference was a good opportunity for Slovenia to contribute to the common goal of GHS implementation. Dr. Hans de Kruijf provided opening remarks on behalf of UNITAR. He stressed the importance of the development of recommendations and suggestions for concrete follow-up activities for effective implementation of the GHS and the importance of actions on the part of all stakeholders for effective GHS implementation. He thanked the hosts, partners and donors for making the meeting possible.

2.2 Technical Overview of the GHS

The first day of the workshop included a number of presentations by experts on technical aspects of the GHS.

Mr. William Machin (CEFIC) provided an introduction to the GHS' background and history, general GHS instruments, EU instruments as well as GHS options, including the building block approach. He also presented on GHS hazard communication principles including labels, pictograms and safety data sheets. He mentioned users' education and training as an integral part of hazard communication and he spoke about key target audiences for training which include workers, emergency responders, transporters and those involved in the preparation of labels, SDS and hazard communication strategies.

Dr. Dieter Heitkamp (CEFIC) presented the main physical hazards which are relevant for the classification of substances and mixtures according to GHS. He compared the current EU system and the new classification and labelling system under the GHS. He also mentioned additional hazard classes, new categories and different criteria/test methods which will be new in the EU.

Dr. Sue Hubbard (CEFIC) focused on GHS health hazards and the classification of substances and mixtures. She mentioned the main issues for health hazards include: identification of the health hazard based on effect, differences in the definition of classification, difficulties in expert judgement, insufficient guidance, weight of evidence, animal welfare, the acceptance of human data outside the EU and issues related to down stream consequences. She also expressed expectation on further development of guidelines and on development of a world-wide classification list.

Mr. Jonas Falck (Swedish Chemicals Inspectorate (KEMI)) presented the basic elements of the environmental hazard criteria for classification of substances and mixtures (aquatic toxicity, bioaccumulation, degradation). He also mentioned the bridging principles and summation method, as well as a need for further development of the environmental hazard criteria.

Ms. Simona Fajfar (National Chemicals Bureau of Slovenia) spoke on REACH and GHS. She stressed that in order to achieve a functioning EU internal market for substances on their own or in preparation, while at the same time ensuring a high level of protection for human health and the environment, rules should be established for a classification and labelling inventory. Priorities for harmonised classification and labelling are carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic (CMR) chemicals and respiratory sensitizers. EU resources should focus on substances of the highest concern. She added that there was a need to synchronise the two systems and avoid as well as reduce double labelling.

2.3 Overview of the GHS in the Context of EU and non-EU Countries

During the second day of the workshop, the presentations focused on GHS implementation issues in EU and non-EU countries:

Mr. Hans De Kruijf presented on the UNITAR/ILO Global GHS Capacity Building Programme, global activities, regional strategies, and national pilot project methodology⁴. He also provided information on possible workshop outcomes.

Ms. Irina Zatenskaya of the Republican Scientific Practical Center of Hygiene of the Ministry of Health of Belarus spoke on Belarus' experiences in GHS implementation. She explained the current situation in Belarus and plans regarding GHS implementation. She stressed that an interministerial working group was needed for implementation of GHS by decision of the Council of Ministers.

Ms. Valentine Radjenović from Serbia explained general problems regarding existing systems for chemicals management in Serbia. She mentioned poor organization and implementation of preventive measures, negligence and inadequate handling of hazardous chemicals.

Mr. Kujtim Bicaku from Albania presented plans regarding GHS implementation which are at the initial stages in Albania. Albanian institutional and industrial capacities in the field of chemicals management are not adequate for proper chemicals management.

Mr. Hans Steinkellner from EC DG Enterprise provided information on the structure of EU draft GHS regulation, information on harmonisation of classification and labelling between the different legislative systems,

⁴ For further information on the UNITAR/ILO Global GHS Capacity Building Programme visit: <http://www.unitar.org/cwg/ghs/index.html>.

and between transport and supply, as well as information on EU internet stakeholder consultations and on transitional periods⁵.

Ms. Rosa Garcia Couto from the UNECE provided information on GHS and transport. She mentioned that classification for transport was not only based on intrinsic properties but also risk during transport. In transport there are nine classes, some of which are subdivided. Low hazard GHS classes are not subject to transport regulations if there is no significant risk during transport.

Mr. Eugen Anwander from the Government of Austria finished the presentations by presenting the challenges of putting into force relevant GHS legislation. He reviewed the consequences of new labelling such as the risk of confusion during the transition period, as well as the need to focus the choice for a transitional period mainly upon the needs of consumers and workers.

⁵ For further information on GHS implementation in the EU, please visit:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/reach/ghs_en.htm.

3. Summary of Working Group Discussions

As a key component of the workshop, participants were asked to identify and discuss national and regional GHS implementation issues in working groups for EU and non-EU countries. Further, the groups reflected on regional implementation issues across four key sectors (industrial workplace, agriculture, transport, and consumer products). Participants were asked to consider existing structures in EU countries within the region for chemical classification and hazard communication, gaps and capacity needs, and key steps and activities which could be a basis for further work on GHS implementation in each country.

The outcome was a summary of the issues and observations for presentation to and examination in plenary in order to inform the development of national GHS implementation strategies and provide a basis for workshop recommendations. This section provides a brief summary of the working groups' deliberations.

3.1 GHS Implementation Issues for EU and Candidate Countries

The working group for EU and candidate countries focused on possible advantages and disadvantages, particularly for new countries for GHS implementation in the industrial workplace, agriculture, transport and consumer product sectors, and in partnership with industry, as well as expected benefits and cost savings.

It was concluded that the main challenges for industry will be the transition period and the significant workload in updating the labels and safety data sheets. There will also be issues related to enforcement during the transition period. Participants also highlighted:

- the GHS as implemented in supply/use legislation at the EU level;
- the impacts of REACH;
- more need for supplementary information about the chosen classification strategy;
- the high level of expertise required in inspectorates;
- enhanced need for experts supporting inspectors in their control cases; and
- preparedness of enforcement bodies.

It was recommended that EU countries need to create special guidelines and/or programs for education about the technical aspects of the GHS. There is also a need for development of appropriate education and training which can serve as a basis for this approach. Training should be appropriate for and commensurate with the nature of the work or exposure. Others involved in the transport and supply of hazardous chemicals also require training to varying degrees. Systems should

consider strategies required for educating consumers in interpreting label information on products that they use.

3.2 GHS Implementation Issues for non-EU Countries

The non-EU countries working group concluded that there is a real need for developing a regional approach and cooperation. There are many advantages with regards to cooperation, but also there are some disadvantages (e.g. the possible dominance of large countries versus small countries, competition, levels of development, culture, and differences in legislation). Preferably sub-regions could be recognized, such as the Balkan area and the former NIS-countries. The suggestion is that the focal points for GHS in the countries are the potential members of such a group. One reason to create sub-regions is the relative similarity between the countries of these areas in their administrative systems. A challenge will be to identify the lead agencies for this cooperation.

4. Workshop Conclusions and Recommendations

The workshop concluded that the GHS is an important component of sound regional and national chemicals management. However, challenges in implementation exist for both EU and non-EU countries of the Central and Eastern European and Central Asia region. It was recommended that education and training programmes should be developed to build capacities among stakeholders for GHS implementation in the region. Also, to better coordinate GHS activities in the region, participants recommended that focal points for the GHS be established in each country. In conclusion, participants agreed that while differing challenges exist for EU and non-EU countries, there is still a need to work together for regional implementation of the GHS.

Annex A: Workshop Agenda**Conference on Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) for CEE Region**

organised in co-operation with
the Ministry of Health, National Chemicals Bureau, OPCW , Government
of Switzerland and UNITAR/ILO

Bled, Slovenia

24 - 25 October 2006

Aim of the Meeting

The aim of this meeting is to provide information on implementation of the GHS at the CEE region as well as technical aspects of the GHS.

It will also be a possibility to share the ideas and experience linked with the enforcement and transposition of the GHS into national level

For more information on TAIEX assistance and to download presentations after this event, please go to: <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/taieux>

Day I : Tuesday, 24 October 2006

Introduction to the GHS document

8.45	Registration
Chair: Alojz Grabner and Tatjana Humar-Jurič	
9.00 - 9.30	Welcome
9.30 - 10.30	Introduction into GHS (CEFIC: William MACHIN)
10.30 - 11.00	Coffee break
Chair: William Machin and Tatjana Humar-Jurič	
11.00 - 11.45	Physical Hazards - Classification of Substances and Mixtures According to GHS (CEFIC: Dieter Heitkamp)
11.45 - 12.30	Health Hazards - Classification of Substances and Mixtures According to GHS (CEFIC: Sue Hubbard)
12.30 - 14.00	Lunch break
14.00 - 14.45	Environment Hazards - Classification of Substances and Mixtures According to GHS (KEMI: Jonas Falck)
14.45 - 15.15	GHS Hazard Communication (CEFIC: William MACHIN)
15.15 - 15.45	Coffee break
15.45 - 16.30	REACH Links to the GHS (Malta/Slovenia: Martin SEYCHELL /Simona FAJFAR)
16.30 - 16.45	Conclusions of Day I

Day II : Wednesday, 25 October 2006

Implementation of the GHS

Chair: Tatjana Humar-Jurič and De Kruijf Herman (Hans)	
9.00 - 9.30	GHS Capacity Building and Implementation (UNITAR: De Kruijf Herman (Hans))
9.30 - 10.15	Capacity Building and Implementation nonEU countries (Belarus, Serbia, Albania Irina ZASTENSKAYA, Valentine RADEJNOVIČ, Kujtim BICAKU)
10.15 - 10.30	Discussion
10.30 - 11.00	Coffee break
11.00 - 11.30	GHS Implementation in EU (DG Enterprise: Hans Steinkellner)
11.30 - 11.45	Discussion
11.45 - 12.15	GHS and Transport (UNECE -TGD: Rosa GARCIA COUTO)
12.15 - 13.45	Lunch Break
13.45 - 14.15	GHS Enforcement (Austrian Inspection: Eugen Anwander)
14.15 - 15.30	Working Groups: GHS implementation and issues arising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Countries and Candidates Countries (Chair: William MACHIN, Hans Steinkellner) • Non EU Countries (Chair: Irina ZASTENSKAYA, De Kruijf Herman (Hans))
15.30 - 16.00	Coffee break
16.00 - 16.30	Conclusions of the Working Groups in Plenary
16.30 - 17.00	Final Conclusions and Close of the Conference

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Annex C: List of Acronyms

APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
CEFIC	European Chemical Industry Council
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GHS	Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
ICCM	International Conference on Chemicals Management
ICSC	international chemical safety card
IFCS	Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOMC	Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals
IPCS	International Programme on Chemical Safety
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
Mercosur	Common Market of the South
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PIC	Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade
POPs	Persistent Organic Pollutants
SAICM	Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management
SCEGHS	United Nations Sub-committee of Experts on the GHS
SCETDG	United Nations Sub-committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods
SDS	safety data sheet
SME	Small and medium sized enterprise
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNRTDG	United Nations Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization



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