



LIFE16 GIE/DE/000738

Enabling REACH consumer information rights on chemicals in articles by IT-tools

LIFE Ask REACH

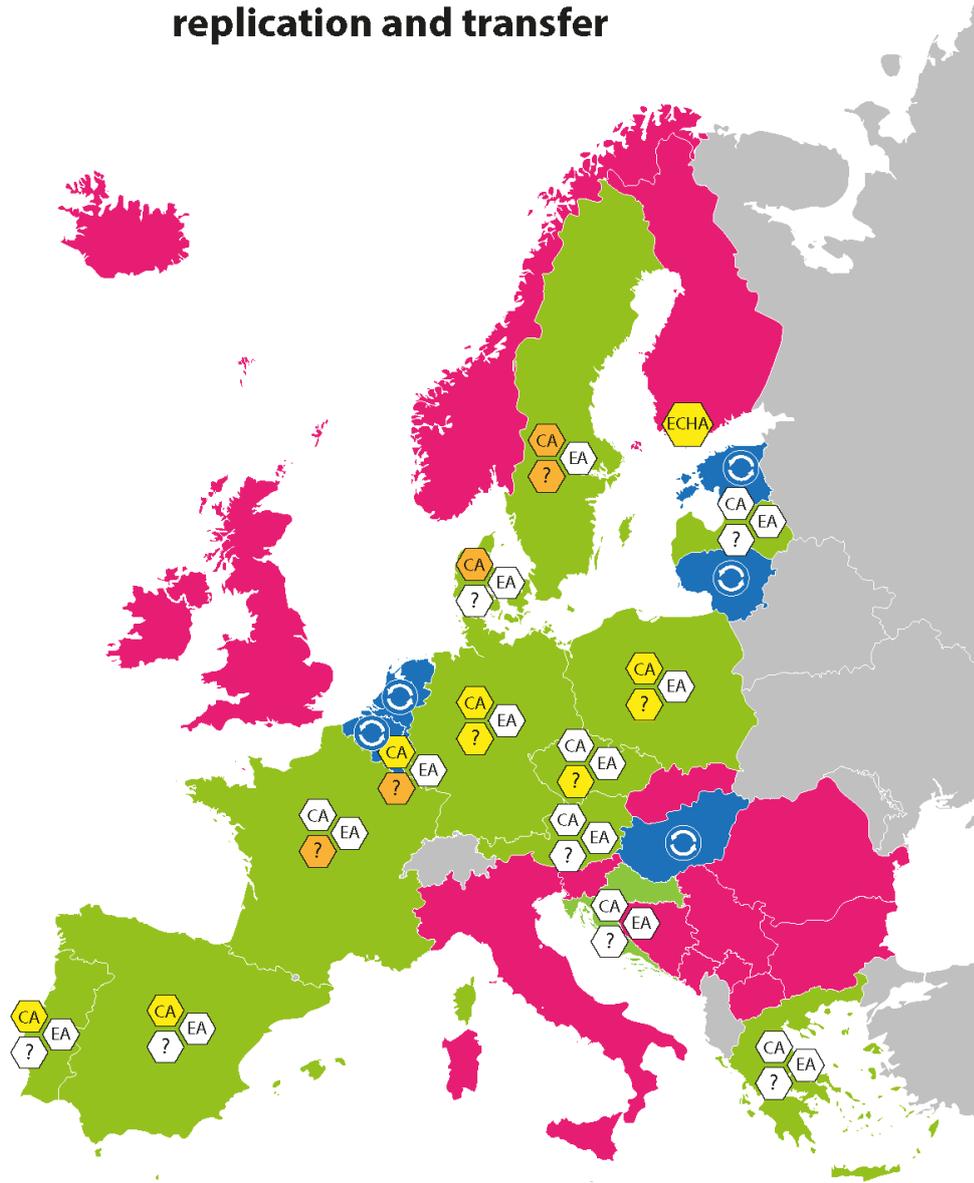
- in brief -

Expected starting date:	01/09/2017
Expected ending date:	31/08/2022
Total Project duration	60 months
Total budget	€ 7,000,027
Total eligible budget	€6,996,327
Requested EU contribution:	€ 4,197,483
(%) of eligible costs	60,00 %
Coordinating Beneficiary	Umweltbundesamt
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Partners:

AB01: Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland e. V. (BUND)
AB02: Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology (LIST)
AB03: Hochschule Darmstadt (Sofia)
AB04: The Danish Environmental Protection Agency (DKEPA)
AB05: Swedish Chemicals Agency (KEMI)
AB06: Baltijas Vides Forums (BEF LV)
AB07: Verein für Konsumenteninformation (VKI)
AB08: GLOBAL 2000 Umweltschutzorganisation (G2000)
AB09: Ecologistas En Accion (EeA)
AB10: Fundacja Kupuj Odpowiedzialnie (Buy Responsibility Foundation) (FKO)
AB11: Arnika - Toxics and Waste Programme
AB12: Baltic Environmental Forum Germany (BEF DE)
AB13: Zelena akcija (ZelHR)
AB14: ZERO - Association for the Sustainability of the Earth System
AB15: National Observatory of Athens (NOA)
AB16: European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
AB17: Institut National de l'Environnement Industriel et des Risques (INERIS)
AB18: Danish Consumer Council / Forbrugerrådet Tænk (DCC)
AB19: Swedish Consumers' Association / Sveriges Konsumenter (SCA)

LIFE AskREACH - Our partner countries, replication and transfer



Legend

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|--|---|
| competent authority | | enforcement or other authority | | | issued support letter |
| helpdesk | | | | | project partner |
| | country in which the project takes place | | countries in which the project campaign is replicated | | countries to which the app is transferred |

Project objectives

REACH aims at a high level of protection of human health and the environment. It provides incentives for manufacturers, importers and downstream users of chemicals to replace “substances of very high concern” (SVHC) by suitable alternatives. REACH also addresses article suppliers (solid objects, e.g. furniture, textile, electronics etc.) containing SVHC in a concentration above 0.1 %. While awareness on the need to substitute SVHC in general has significantly increased, particularly market actors at the end of the supply chain (article producers and retailers), as well as consumers are often not aware of the presence of SVHC in an article.

REACH not only defines an obligation for article suppliers to communicate on SVHC in articles down the supply chain, but it also claims a “**right to know**” for consumers: On request any supplier of an article shall inform the consumer if an SVHC is contained and how the article can be safely used (REACH Art. 33). However, from the consumer’s perspective the provision is not useful, as the supplier may answer within 45 days and, in case no SVHC is contained, does not have to provide an answer at all. This may create confusion because the consumer cannot distinguish between incompliant suppliers and suppliers not answering because the article does not include an SVHC. Furthermore, the information is not available on the spot to influence the purchasing decisions. Empirical data show that only few consumers ask for SVHC information because they are not aware of their right.

LIFE AskREACH has the overall goal to enhance substitution of SVHC in articles by increasing the market demand for SVHC free articles and supporting industrial actors to identify SVHC in their articles. The proposal does not target industrial processing or particular articles or substances directly, but contributes to exposure reduction by raising awareness and ultimately changing the purchasing behaviour of consumers as well as the approaches to product design by the market actors.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- Raising consumer awareness on SVHC in articles,
- Raising awareness and compliance of article suppliers on SVHC in articles and communication obligations under REACH,
- Facilitating communication on SVHC between consumers and companies,
- Initiating and guiding supply chain communication processes that finally aim at substituting SVHC in articles.

Environmental problem targeted

The overall aim of the project is to reduce potential damage in the environment and to human health from exposure to SVHC.

SVHC are legally defined by REACH Article 57 and include substances, which are persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic or very persistent and very bioaccumulative (PBT/vPvB), substances that could cause cancer, gene mutations or damage to the reproductive system (CMR) and substances with properties of equivalent concern, e.g. endocrine disrupters (ED) or respiratory sensitisers. Due to their toxic properties, SVHC may cause damage to human health, wildlife or the functioning of ecosystems. The group of PBT/vPvB substances are of particular concern for the environment, because they persist and accumulate in certain environmental compartments and in the food chain. The latter is also leading to considerable exposure of humans to SVHC and potential adverse health effects. The group of endocrine disrupters also deserves particular attention with regard to human health and the environment, because these substances may be effective already at very low concentrations. They may cause damage to the reproductive system, the immune system and change (reproductive) behaviour, thus potentially having adverse effects on the following generations as well as on population dynamics of species, which could result in considerable impairment of ecosystem functioning.

Scientific research has demonstrated that the simultaneous exposure to several hazardous substances may result in adverse effects, even if the concentrations of the individual substances remain below their individual effect thresholds. This mixture toxicity or “combination effect” is particularly, but not only, relevant to PBT/vPvB and ED substances. As PBT/vPvB substances persist in the environment and

frequently accumulate in the same environmental compartments or tissues, such as sediments, soils and fatty tissues, they are more likely to co-occur in the environment or in organisms than substances that are quickly degraded or metabolised. Different EDs may act on the same receptors.

Monitoring data of PBT/vPvB show that these substances are present even in remote areas, far from their emission sources, due to global transport via water, air and biota. For example, perfluorinated octanoic acid (PFOA) is detected in concentrations between 0.02 and 16 ng/L in surface waters and between 0.6 and 36 ng/g w/w in polar bears (German SVHC identification dossier). Decabromodiphenyl ether (DecaBDE), a brominated flame retardant, is detected in marine sediments (around 100 µg/kg up to 1.2 mg/kg) and in biota (e.g. fish, shellfish, marine mammals, birds, terrestrial invertebrates and terrestrial mammals) or in human breast milk in concentrations up to 2.7 ng/g lipids in the EU (ECHA's restriction proposal of August 2014).

Articles containing SVHC often have a wide-dispersive use and release of SVHC cannot be excluded throughout the whole life cycle, including the waste stage. In order to reduce exposures of the environment and humans, the emissions of SVHC should be minimised. The most efficient means of emission reduction is the phase-out of the use, while risk management measures are widely ineffective when it comes to unintended emissions from articles.

The phase-out of SVHC in all applications, where this is technically and economically feasible, is one of the central goals of the REACH Regulation. Provisions in other legislation, such as the ban of CMR and PBT/vPvB substances in biocides and plant protection products, as well as use restrictions in some consumer product legislation (e.g. Toy Safety Directive) also pursue this aim. However, the use of only a few SVHC is currently restricted in articles at EU and national level. While regulation may still take a long time, market pressure on SVHC included in the candidate list could accelerate the phase-out of these substances and their substitution with safer alternatives.

According to ECHA's 2016 report on the operation of REACH, there are "clear indications that information on substances in articles is not adequately communicated in the article supply chains". This may be due to several reasons, such as a lack of awareness of companies on their obligations to communicate on SVHC under REACH and the fact that article supply chains are complex and involve a high number of duty holders. If one actor in the chain fails to communicate, all subsequent actors are unable to fulfil their requirements, unless they conduct chemical analyses to measure the content of SVHC. Companies appear not to acknowledge the benefits from knowing the SVHC content in their articles and hence lack incentives for communication. Finally, according to ECHA, consumers are unaware of their right to ask for information on SVHC in articles. If they do not ask, an important incentive to communicate in the supply chain is missing.

The project aims at exposure reduction of SVHC by fostering substitution of these substances in articles. This would affect the entire supply chain and hence reduce emissions to the environment from all lifecycle stages, including from the use and disposal of consumer articles. The elimination of SVHC would also facilitate recycling and hence moving towards a more circular economy. The project enhances substitution by increasing market demand for SVHC free articles (market pull) and by supporting industrial actors to identify these substances in their articles. Consequently, this project does not target industrial processing or particular articles or substances directly, but contributes to emission and exposure reduction by influencing awareness and ultimately the purchasing behaviour of consumers, as well as the approaches to product design by the market actors.

The governance aspect of this project, that reduces the problem of damage to environment and human health from SVHC, relates to the awareness and the degree of responsibility taken by all stakeholders, including consumers, on the one hand and the implementation of legal requirements on the other hand.

The focal target group of awareness raising and strengthening of responsible purchasing behaviour are consumers. The goal of the project actions is two-fold: to increase the consumers' general knowledge on risks from SVHC to human health and the environment and to enable them to make informed purchasing decisions considering the content of SVHC in the articles they intend to buy. These two factors should drive consumer behaviour a) towards active information retrieval on SVHC in articles

via the smartphone app right at the point of sale and b) changing their consumption pattern by selecting SVHC free articles.

According to a Eurobarometer study on chemicals conducted in 2012, about 25% of the consumers stated to “check articles” with regard to the chemicals content before buying them. According to this study, a considerable share of consumers believes that substances on the EU market are not safe (around 30%). Whereas there is considerable awareness that chemicals could pose risks to human health and the environment, very few EU consumers know their right to ask article suppliers about SVHC in articles and to receive respective information within 45 days and free of charge. However, no statistics are available on this.

The second target group of actions to raise awareness and responsible behaviour are the market actors, i.e. the article producers, retailers and their supply chains, including article importers. Making them (more) aware of their legal obligations and confronting them with an increased market demand for SVHC free articles and information on SVHC presence in articles, respectively, should steer their behaviour towards an elimination of SVHC from their articles / supply chains.

In summary, the core aim of the project is to increase substitution of SVHCs with safer alternatives by enhancing communication on SVHC in articles as legally implemented by REACH Article 33 (1) (communication in the supply chain) and Article 33 (2) (consumer information). Market actors may decide to substitute SVHC when experiencing (an increased) demand for information on SVHC presence in their articles. The consumer app should contribute to an increase in information requests as it will motivate the consumer to ask, whereas the database should support companies to efficiently meet this request as their answer will have to be given only once per article if entered in the database.

The project includes actions to motivate market actors to phase out SVHC via awareness raising and by indicating potentials for efficiency in communication along the supply chain and to consumers. According to ECHA’s report on the implementation of REACH, compliance with the respective REACH obligations is low and should be considerably increased.

The project success will be measured, among others, by monitoring

- the number of users of the app and the number of requests submitted via it as an indicator of increased awareness and market pressure,
- the number of article suppliers providing information on SVHC in articles to the database and answering to consumer requests as a measure of legal compliance and raised awareness in supply chains
- the number of articles for which SVHC information is available as a measure for increased transparency enabling informed purchasing decisions
- the number of consumers changing their purchasing behaviour and the number of articles in which SVHC are substituted as an indicator for increased market pressure and reduced use of SVHC

A set of indicators and an assumption on their quantification has been developed during preparation of the proposal and is included in the LIFE performance indicators table which is enclosed in the attachment section of the proposal.

Actions and means involved:

The project will develop a Europe-wide applicable smartphone app for consumers to launch requests according to REACH Art. 33. The app will be connected to a database with information on SVHC in articles, thereby easing and speeding up the responses by the article suppliers. In addition, a supply chain communication tool for companies to increase their competencies and capacities to comply with REACH will be adapted and promoted.

The mentioned IT tools (database, consumer app and company supply chain tool) will be developed in two preparatory actions (A1, A2) and two implementation actions (B1, B2). Then, we will prepare and implement two large scale campaigns in 13 countries addressing i) consumers to do the information requests and ii) companies to provide answers and have their supply chain communication under control (A3, B3, B4). The tool development and campaigns will be accompanied by actions to make the project visible all over Europe (D1), to facilitate the political uptake and international networking with other (LIFE) projects (D2) and to replicate the campaigns in all non-partner EU Member States (D3).

In total, the following 14 actions shall be implemented:

A Preparatory actions

- A.1 Benchmarking experience with IT tools for consumer & supply chain information and analysis of impacts on consumer & supplier behaviour
- A.2 Preparation of software architecture development: agreement on methodology, compilation of technical specifications, tendering
- A.3 Preparation of info materials, stakeholder communication strategies and team building to pave the road for campaign implementation

B Implementation actions

- B.1 Development of business logics and data storage for information on articles
- B.2 Development of consumer app, web-based interfaces, and web portal
- B.3 The campaign for consumers: "Your right to know"
- B.4 The campaign for companies: "Your obligation to communicate and how to fulfil it"

C Monitoring of project impact

- C.1 Monitoring of project impacts on the environment and socio-economic factors related to stakeholder awareness and behaviour

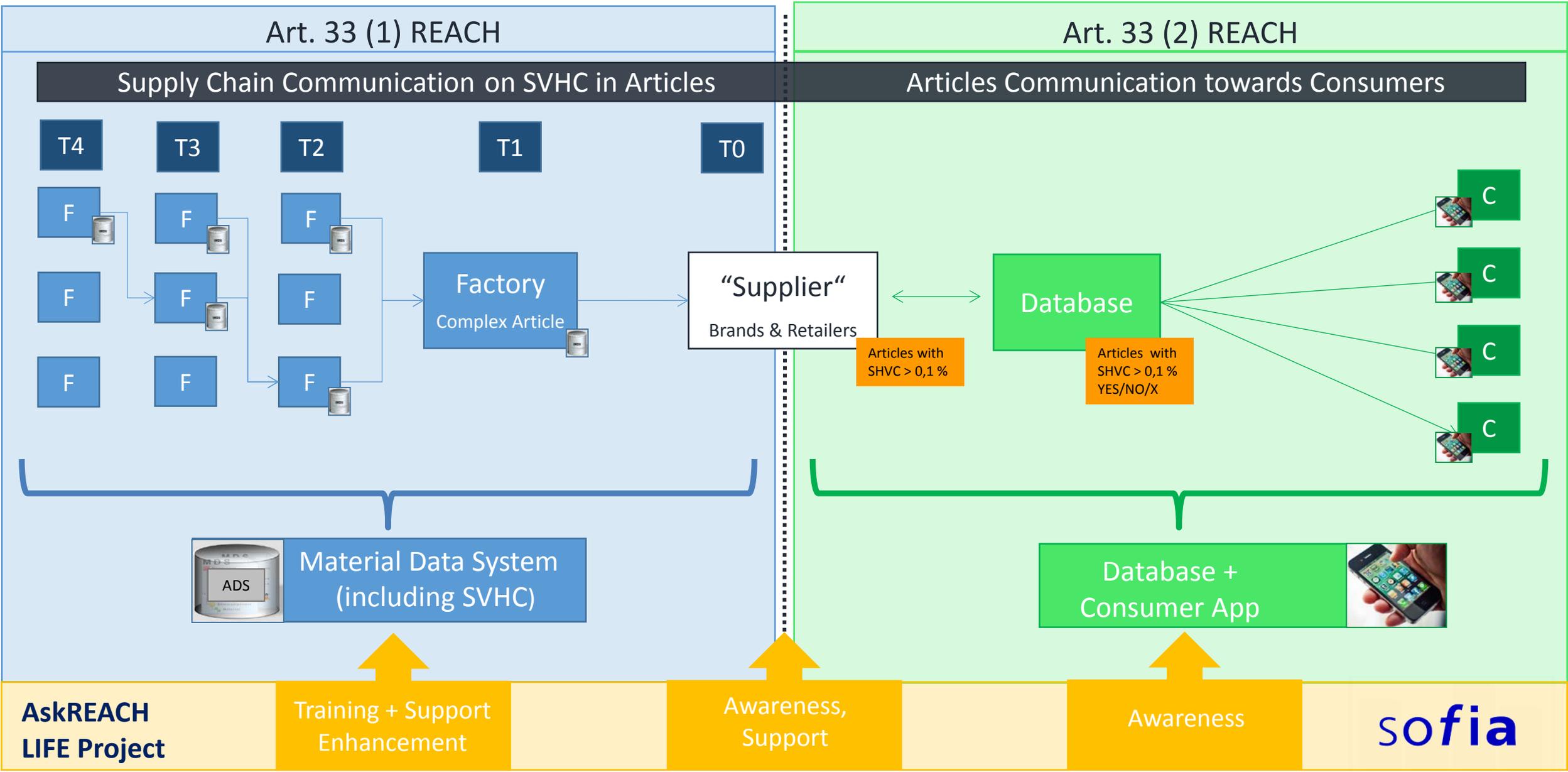
D Communication and dissemination of the project and its results

- D.1 General project visibility and dissemination of results
- D.2 Policy uptake and international networking
- D.3 Transfer of apps and replication of the campaigns in non-partner countries

E Project management and monitoring of project progress

- E.1 Project management & administration
- E.2 Project progress monitoring
- E.3 After-LIFE Plan

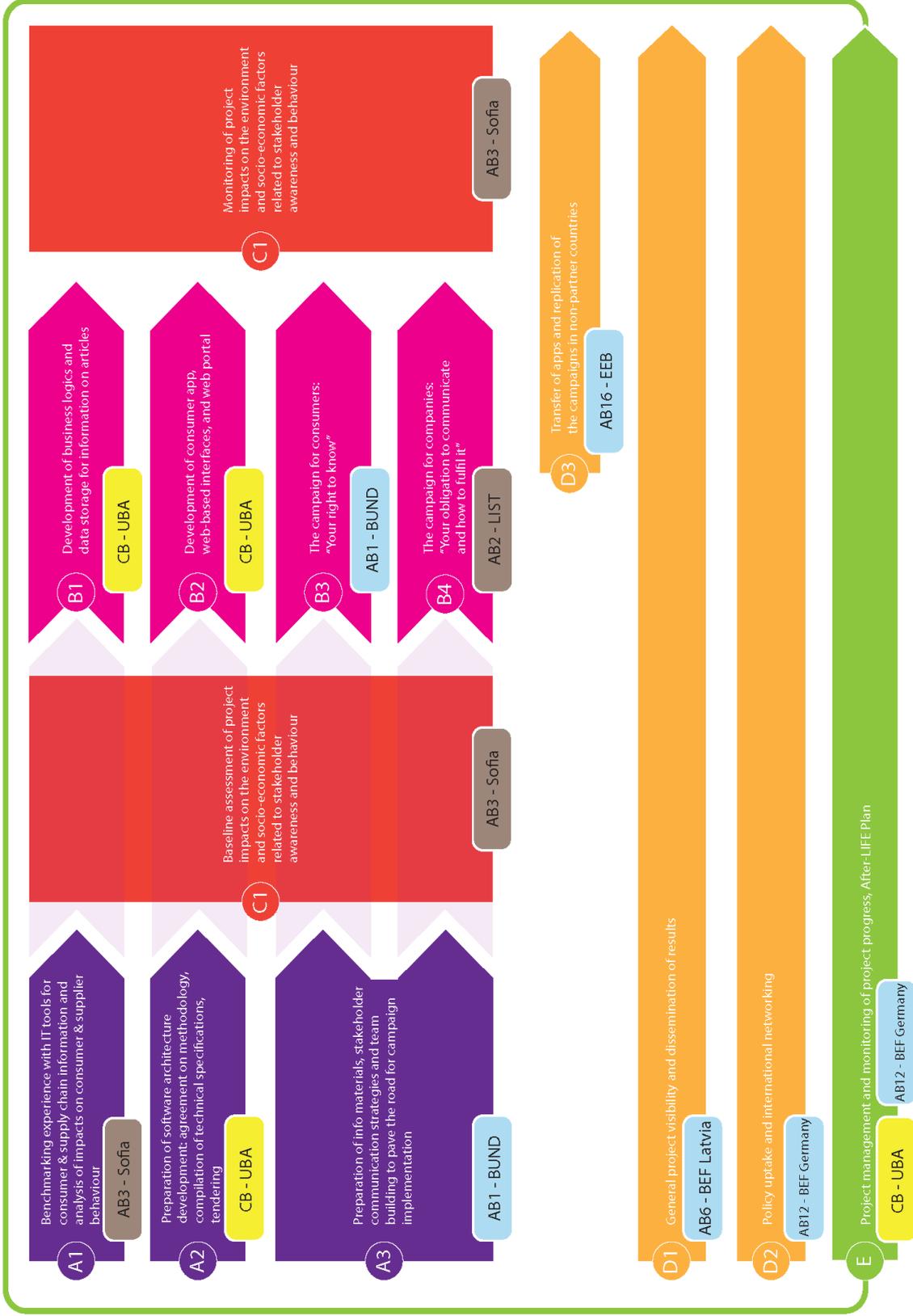
Communication on SVHC in Articles [including components]: Art. 33 (1) and Art. 33(2) REACH



→ Data flow

T Tier
 F Factory
 ADS Article Data Sheet
 DB Database
 C Consumer
 Member State Partner Action
 "Supplier" = "Supplier of an article": Art. 3 No. 33 REACH, limited to brands and retailers

LIFE AskREACH: Action flow chart



Expected results of the project

The project develops a central European IT system for communication on SVHC in articles:

- Consumer information tool (multi-language app)
- SVHC/article database for feed-in by companies
- Supply chain communication tool for companies

The system will work in the entire EU and initiate communication on and substitution of SVHC in articles. We expect the project to cause a substantial reduction of SVHC in articles and correspondingly lower SVHC emissions.

The project will:

- be implemented in **13 partner countries**
- organize **two 3-years-campaigns** targeting suppliers and consumers in the partner countries
- replicate the campaign in additional 5 EU MS
- transfer the apps to all other EU MS, EEA and 4 candidate countries
- organize a Europe-wide experience exchange and policy dialogue on implementation and enforcement of REACH Art. 33

The project will reach a large number of target groups:

- Approximately **2.96 million citizens** of the partner countries will download the app from the project portal, app stores and partner web sites
- **160,000 users** will download the app in the replication countries
- Probably twice as many individuals will hear, read or see the project information materials, posters, events and internet presence
- Anticipated **3.1 million requests** for SVHC information will be sent to suppliers
- At least **250 suppliers** will be directly involved
- 15 companies will participate in supply chain communication exercises and 225 staff will receive training on SVHC tracking and communication
- Competent Authorities, REACH Helpdesks and other relevant authorities from 28 EU MSs, 3 EEA countries, Switzerland and 4 candidate countries of former Yugoslavia (ca. 70 in total) will participate in the project experience exchange and promote the database and app
- 16 staff of project partner NGOs will receive training on chemicals campaigning and social media campaigning (ca. 20 training hours)
- The partners will organise **395 events** (info days, seminars and trainings) as part of the two campaigns targeted at consumers (action B3) and companies (action B4).
- The partners will attend 22 national/international events, organise 2 international seminars, a final conference and conduct 22 meetings with organisations in other countries to disseminate and replicate the project results.

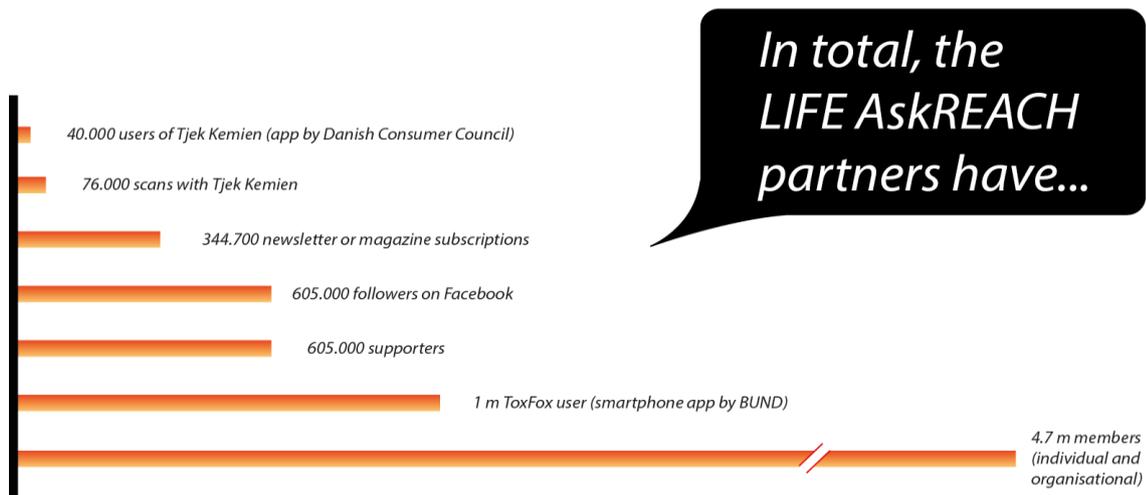
At project end, the database will be institutionalised for future maintenance. The apps will be continuously used and promoted beyond project end by the partners and supporters.

Stakeholders & target audiences

LIFE AskREACH distinguishes between “target audience” and “stakeholders”. The first being the target group for receiving project information and being address of awareness building activities. With “stakeholders” the LIFE programme defines actors that pro-actively take part in the project activities.

The “general consumer” (inhabitant of the partner countries) is the first target audience of the project. Companies supplying articles are the second target audience, especially if they are retailers and should learn about their communication duties under Article 33(2). At the same time they are stakeholders that need to fill in the project’s database. Competent Authorities and enforcement authorities that are concerned about low implementation of REACH Art.33 in the EU Member States are one more stakeholder group. And, finally: the NGOs that will implement the campaigns in the partner countries. Their coordinators are partners to the project, but their members and staff who will ultimately communicate with the target groups are stakeholders to be brought on a common level of knowledge and understanding of the project, its messages and its policy background.

LIFE AskREACH - Our target audience



LIFE AskREACH - Our stakeholders

We identified already more than 150 producers, 100 retailers and 50 potential partner NGOs to work with.

