

Ready for REACH

Feature Initiative: Precious Metals and Rhenium Consortium

Summary: The EU REACH (Registration, Evaluation, and Authorisation of Chemicals) regulation came into force in 2007. The platinum group metals (PGM) industry was quick to respond with the formation of the Precious Metals and Rhenium Consortium in collaboration with other precious metals such as gold and silver. With over 45 members, the Consortium is a dedicated forum to exchange data and information regarding REACH and will enable each member to meet the regulatory requirements more easily.

The new REACH regulation radically transforms previous chemicals legislation in Europe. The IPA fully supports the regulation's goals to close information gaps regarding the hazardous properties of substances and to ensure that the information required for their safe use is communicated across the entire value chain.

In 2006, the European Precious Metals Federation within Eurométaux, the European organisation representing the non-ferrous metals industry, launched a working structure for the formation of a Consortium for precious metals – including silver and silver substances; gold and gold substances; platinum group metals (PGM) and PGM substances. The Consortium Agreement was officially accepted and circulated for signature in July 2007. The Precious Metals and Rhenium Consortium was founded by 25 Founding Members, including some of our IPA members – Johnson Matthey, Umicore, and W.C. Heraeus. The IPA and its members are involved in the Consortium to ensure a consistent response from the PGM industry.

Meanwhile, the Precious Metals and Rhenium Consortium has grown to a Consortium of over 45 members and has installed working groups and task forces to optimise data exchange for registration. Within its different working groups, the Consortium takes care of management processes, legal, technical and cost sharing aspects.



Through the Precious Metals and Rhenium Consortium, the platinum group metals industry engages with downstream users to provide data on the many applications of PGMs. Due to their catalytic properties, PGMs are used widely in the automotive industry (in catalytic converters), and in the production of chemicals and petrochemicals.

Image Source: BASF

The scope of activity of the Precious Metals and Rhenium Consortium is not limited to an exclusive list of precious metals and precious metal compounds, but is built on a broader and more inclusive basis in order to cover substances and intermediates, and also, in some cases, precious metals-bearing non-waste refinable materials. This broad and inclusive scope maximises the read-across potential when preparing the Registration dossiers.

The first REACH obligation, pre-registration, has already been completed. It took place from 1 June 2008 to 30 November 2008. Under pre-registration, the Precious Metals and Rhenium Consortium issued basic information (name of substance and registrant, physiological, toxicological, and eco-toxicological data available) on the substances they registered.

Following the pre-registration phase, the Consortium has launched a data gap analysis, produced an inventory of “general uses” and issued a recommendation regarding the lead registrant, which is required by the regulation. A testing programme will soon be started in order to complete physico-chemical properties gaps and confirm a grouping approach to maximise read-across and minimise testing requirements.

Joint preparation for REACH resulted in an aligned and harmonised pre-registration phase that has successfully increased time- and cost-efficiency. Looking ahead, the Precious Metals and Rhenium Consortium, with its combined pool of expertise, will work to optimise the quality of the registration dossiers, agree on classification and labelling, and finally, strengthen the position of the industry in interactions with the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA).



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Source: European Chemicals Agency

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