

Guidance *Fact Sheet*

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Guidance on the use descriptor system

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A Guidance Fact Sheet provides a short summary of the key aspects of the respective REACH Guidance Document including bibliographic information and other references.

If you have questions or comments in relation to this Fact Sheet please send them by e-mail to info@echa.europa.eu quoting the Fact Sheet reference, issue date and language version, shown above.

WHO SHOULD READ THE GUIDANCE DOCUMENT?

The guidance on the use descriptor system is addressed to those companies who need to carry out exposure assessments for their substances, and consequently have to communicate exposure scenarios to their customers. These companies will need to map out all the uses of a substance, link them to appropriate exposure scenarios and to structure the communication along the supply chain.

The guidance is also addressed to downstream users who should be able to easily establish whether a received exposure scenario covers their uses. The use descriptors will also facilitate communication for making uses known to the supplier.

Each registrant may find the guidance useful for the inclusion of the general description of identified uses in their Technical Dossier and in section 2 of the Chemical Safety Report.

WHAT IS THIS GUIDANCE ABOUT?

The guidance provides a system of use descriptors to standardise the description of the uses of the substances. This will facilitate the identification of uses which needs to be provided in the registration dossier, the building of exposure scenario and short titles and the communication up and down the supply chain¹.

Furthermore, if the registrant bases his brief description of use in his technical Dossier (chapter 3.5 of IUCLID) on the descriptor system as outlined in this guidance, he will be able to ensure consistency with the title and content of the exposure scenario².

The use descriptor system is based on five separate descriptor-lists. The combination of items selected from different lists form a brief description of the use or an exposure scenario title. In addition to their description function, some of the use descriptors reflect exposure related use characteristics. They thus support the identification of suitable exposure estimation entries in one of the available tier 1 exposure estimation tools³.

The guidance includes the following descriptor-lists:

- 1) The *sector of use category* (SU) describes in which sector of the economy the substance is used. The three main user groups (industrial workers, consumers and professionals) included in the list, represent the minimum level of details expected for a registrant in describing the sector of use. They help the assessor in directing the exposure assessment.
- 2) The *chemical product category* (PC) describes the types of chemical products (substances and mixtures) that will finally contain the substance when supplied to the end uses. This descriptor may be particularly useful for mapping supply chains and to follow the mass flow of a substance through the market. The categories may also serve as an indicator for the potential exposure to consumers.

- 3) The *process category* (PROC) describes the application techniques or process types defined from an occupational perspective. Each PROC has a direct impact on the exposure to be expected and on the Risk Management Measures needed.
- 4) The *environmental release category* (ERC) describes the broad conditions of use from an environmental perspective. This is based on those characteristics that give a first indication of the potential of the substance to be released to the environment.
- 5) The *article category* (AC) describes the type of article into which the substance has, if relevant, eventually been processed. The descriptor considers both articles with intended as well as with no intended release.

The guidance also provides an additional list of substance types which refers to the technical function of the substance. This may be used to complete section 1.2 of the Safety Data Sheet for substances meeting the criteria for classification as dangerous.

The document includes references to additional harmonized code systems. NACE categories and UNC system⁴ maybe used when, respectively, SU or PC categories are not suitable. These may be used by the registrant when a higher level of detail is necessary or the suitable categories combination cannot be found using the entries in the pick-lists.

In order to support the mapping and description of uses, the use descriptor system has been implemented in a module of ECHA's Chemical Safety Assessment and Reporting tool *Chesar*⁵. It enables registrants to document the activities during the whole life cycle of a substance in a hierarchical structure which represents the combinations between

¹ See section D.4 in Guidance on IR&CSA chapter D.

² This is a legal requirement of REACH, as laid down in section 5.1.1 of Annex I.

³ See section D.5 in Guidance on IR&CSA chapter D.

⁴ NACE (Nomenclature générale des Activités économiques dans les Communautés Européennes) provides internationally harmonized categories for classifying activities in industry and services. UCN (Use Categories Nordic) system is based on data from the Nordic Product Register.

⁵ Chemical Safety assessment and Reporting tool, developed by ECHA to support registrants preparing their CSA and CSR as available on the [Chesar website](#).

life cycle stages (manufacture, formulation, end-use and service life) and main user groups (industrial workers, consumers and professionals).

By selecting the suitable combination of categories from the relevant lists of descriptors, the registrant will give each exposure scenario in the Chemical Safety Report and attached to the extended SDS a short title. The title will vary depending to whether it covers a wide range or few uses.

The *Chesar* tool will include a functionality to report the identified uses in section 2 of the Chemical Safety Report and in section 3.5 of the IUCLID dossier, once the assessment has been finalised.

WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDANCE DOCUMENT?

Section 12.1 describes the aim of the guidance introducing the use descriptor system concept and its function.

Section 12.2 presents in brief the main elements of the use descriptor system and underlines the link to the exposure estimation tools.

Section 12.3 defines in detail the features of the five descriptor-lists and provides short guidance on how to assign the relevant category.

Section 12.4 provides exemplification on how to assign uses to a category and how to systematically describe uses from a life cycle perspective.

Section 12.5 describes how the use descriptor system can be practically used to identify uses and building exposure scenarios titles. Reference is made to the implementation of the use descriptor system into the new ECHA *Chesar* tool.

All the descriptor-lists are provided in **appendices 12-1 to 12-6** of the document.

Appendix 12-7 provides guidance for converting description of uses based on the previous descriptor pick-lists (version 1) into the revised system.

KEY TERMS USED IN THE GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Identification of uses

For substances >10 ton/year, the identified uses include the registrant's own uses as well as downstream uses that have been assessed and included in the registration by the registrant.

Brief general description of use and short titles of exposure scenarios

Any registrant is obliged to provide a brief general description of the identified uses in his registration dossier (REACH Annex VI, section 3.5). Furthermore the registrant is obliged to give the exposure scenario (if required) and an appropriate short title indicating the use(s) covered by the exposure scenario. REACH requires that the brief general description of the identified uses and the short titles of the exposure scenarios are consistent with each other.

Guidance Fact Sheet
Chapter R.12: Use Descriptor System

LINKS TO RELATED MATERIAL

[REACH Regulation](#) EC No 1907/2006.

[REACH & CLP Guidance website](#) is a single point of access to general and detailed technical guidance on REACH and CLP.

[Guidance Fact Sheets](#) can be found in the publications section of the ECHA website.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

[Guidance on the use descriptor system \(chapter R.12\)](#) can be downloaded from the website of the European Chemicals Agency.

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