



**a toxics-free future**

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## **International SAICM Implementation Project (ISIP)**

In 2010, in an effort to demonstrate SAICM implementation via IPEN Participating Organizations, IPEN launched an International SAICM Implementation Project, also known as ISIP. ISIP aims to mobilize resources for initial enabling activities pertaining to national priorities, in keeping with the work areas set out in the strategic objectives of section IV of the SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy.

In particular, the ISIP supports the Governance objective of SAICM's Overarching Policy Strategy paragraph 26, which calls for enhanced "cooperation on the sound management of chemicals between Governments, the private sector and civil society at the national, regional and global levels."

In addition, ISIP builds on the 2008-2009 Global SAICM Outreach Campaign to raise awareness about SAICM and strengthen collaboration among the public interest, health and labor sectors.

### **ISIP Objectives**

ISIP's four objectives include:

- Promoting the need for sound chemicals management
- Advancing National SAICM Implementation
- Promoting global SAICM implementation by global civil society
- Building capacity among NGOs developing countries and countries with economies in transition

**Title of activity:** Disseminating information on chemicals in Macedonia

**NGO:** Eko-svest / Eco-sense

**Country:** Macedonia

**Date:** 01.11.2010

### **Elements of SAICM Covered:**

Participation in the collection, review, and assessment of existing information on information systems pertaining to chemicals in products including but not limited to regulations, standards and industry practices; Develop specific recommendations for actions to promote implementation of the Strategic Approach with regard to such information, incorporating identified priorities and access and delivery mechanisms; and follow up activities for the SAICM OEWG and ICMM3; Promote the use of safe and effective alternatives, including non-chemical alternatives to organic chemicals that are highly toxic, persistent and bioaccumulative; Promote the development and use of products and processes that pose lesser risks; Articles and products containing hazardous substances should all be accompanied by relevant information for users, workplaces and at disposal sites; Promote provision of information for all chemicals in commerce, including appropriate information detailing their inherent hazards should be made

available to the public at no charge and generated where needed with essential health, safety and environmental information made available (ICCM2 decision II/4, GPA items 54, 44, 108,111)

**Description of the specific product(s) and chemical(s) related to the activity:**

In cosmetic products:

Eko-svest made a market research and chose around 30 cosmetic products from one large and one small market chain. Out of 30 products, these were:

- 5 shampoos
- 4 liquid soaps
- 4 depilatory crèmes
- 3 hair dyes
- 3 hair gels
- 2 hair sprays
- 1 hand cream
- 1 face powder
- 1 tan crème
- 1 hair conditioner
- 1 hair care mask
- 1 deodorant stick
- 1 nail polish remover
- 1 blush

In cleaning products:

We used 30 household products for further research about their safety and presence of warning signs. We chose detergent for dish washing, glass cleaning product, product for cleaning lime scale and for disinfection, product for WC and kitchen cleaning, window cleaner, universal cleaner, and rust cleaner.

In toys:

Many of the toys found on the market have high concentration of phthalates, and heavy metals (lead and chrome). They have negative influence on the reproductive, endocrine and central nervous system. All types of toys were checked.

**Description of the toxic effects of the chemicals contained in the product(s):**

The chemicals found in the cosmetic products and their effects are listed below:

<b><u>CHEMICAL</u></b>	<b><u>EFFECTS</u></b>
Calcium hydroxide	It irritates the respiratory tract and can cause coughing and chemical bronchitis. If swallowed can cause internal bleeding, vomiting, diarrhea and collapse. Long term exposure can be irritating to the eyes, can cause even blindness.
Talc	Not recommended for children under the age of 3 years, cannot be used on irritated skin, especially around the genital area, because of the risk of ovary cancer.
Phenoxy ethanol	Harmful if swallowed, inhaled or absorbed through the skin. Severe eye and skin irritant.
Formaldehyde	Can cause allergic reactions and it's carcinogenic.
Bronopol	High concentration can cause allergic reactions. Toxic for the lungs and irritant to the skin and eyes.

Methylparaben, ethylparaben	Can impact the endocrine system.
Methylisothiazolinone (MIT)	Allergen and cytotoxin.
Geraniol	High concentration can cause allergic reactions.
Methylchlorisothiazolinone (5-chloro-2-methyl-4-isothiazolinone)	Allergen for 1.7 % of the people. Can be an irritant or can cause chemical burns.
Benzyl alcohol	Toxic and harmful, especially in products used on or around the mouth.
Phenoxyethanol	Irritant for the eyes, skin or lungs, especially if swallowed.
Thioglycolic Acid	Toxic and corrosive acid.
2-(4-tert-butylbenzyl)propionaldehyde	Classified as irritant.
DMDM Hydantoin	Can cause allergic reactions. By decomposing it can cause release of formaldehyde which is carcinogenic.
Coumarin	Classified as irritant.
Benzophenone-3	Harmful for the endocrine system.
Butylphenyl methylpropional	Can cause allergic reactions.
Sodium hydroxide	Irritant for the eyes, skin or lungs, especially if swallowed. Also, it's corrosive.
Hydroxyisohexyl 3-cyclohexene carboxaldehyde	Can cause allergic reactions.
Triethanolamine ( )	Can cause allergic reactions, and problems with the eyes, drying of hair and skin. Toxic for some aquatic organisms.
Potassium hydroxide	Toxic or harmful, especially for products used on or around the mouth. Corrosive, it can cause burns.
Butylphenyl methylpropional	Can cause allergic reactions.
Cocamide DEA	After absorbed through the skin, can form carcinogenic compounds. Allergen, can cause contact dermatitis, people with skin allergies should be careful.
2-methyl-4-isothiazolinone – (Methylisothiazolinone)	Corrosive, can cause burns.
Benzophenone-4	High concentration can cause allergic reactions.

Amyl cinnamal	High concentration can cause allergic reactions.
Eugenol, Geraniol, Isoeugenol	Classified as allergen.
Alpha-isomethylionone	Classified as allergen.
Benzyl salicylate	High concentration can cause allergic reactions. People with skin allergies should avoid.
Citronellol	Classified as allergen.
Hydroxycitronellal	Classified as allergen.
Ammonia	Toxic if inhaled. Corrosive, and very harmful for the eyes. Also harmful for aquatic organisms.
4-amino-2-hydroxytoluene	High concentration can cause allergic reactions. eye contact can cause irritation.
m-aminophenol	Toxic for aquatic organisms. Harmful if inhaled or swallowed.
Cetrimonium chloride	High concentration can be toxic for the human skin.
Ammonium hydroxide	Irritant for the nose, throat and lungs, also skin and eyes (can cause permanent damage). It is corrosive. Long-term exposure in low concentrations can cause bronchitis.
p-aminophenol	Toxic and harmful for the environment, especially for the aquatic organisms.
p-phenyldiamine	Classified as irritant. Toxic and harmful for the environment, especially for the aquatic organisms.
Toluene-2,5-diamine sulfate	Toxic for the environment, harmful if swallowed or through skin contact.
Sodium metabisulfite	Classified as irritant, harmful if swallowed, there is a risk for serious damage of the eyes if it contacts them.
Salicylic acid	Toxic if inhaled or swallowed, or if absorbed through the skin. It is also an irritant.
Toluene-2,5-diamine sulfate	Toxic for the environment, harmful if inhaled or through skin contact.
Linalool	Classified as irritant, toxic for the environment, especially for aquatic organisms. Harmful if swallowed.

Resorcinol	Classified as allergen.
Fragrance	Synthetic odour/perfume used in cosmetics can have over 200 ingredients. The complex of perfumes is labelled as "Fragrance" and it is therefore impossible to know which chemicals it contains. These chemicals can cause dizziness, headaches, itching, hyper pigmentation, coughing, vomiting, irritation to the skin and other nuisances.

According to the EU laws, a substance above the recommended concentration becomes harmful, and information about concentration should be written on the packing. As many labels contained these products, it was obvious that the products containing the chemical were not the recommended concentration, thus increasing its negative effects.

Chemicals found in toys are listed below:

<b><u>CHEMICAL</u></b>	<b><u>EFFECTS</u></b>
Phthalates	Causes testicle atrophy in boys, it can cause reduction of the spermatozoids, and the latest research links phthalates to liver cancer.
Formaldehyde	Chemical that is carcinogenic and can cause allergic reactions.
Benzene	It's carcinogenic and long term exposures can affect the bone marrow and forming of the blood cells. Short term exposures on a low concentration of benzene can cause dizziness, coma and even death.
Toluene	With skin or eye contact can cause irritation. If inhaled it can cause respiratory irritation, if swallowed can cause stomach pains.
A-pinene	Dangerous if swallowed or inhaled. With skin or eye contact can cause irritation.
Ethyl benzene	With skin or eye contact can cause irritation. If inhaled it can cause respiratory irritation. In high concentration it is a narcotic.
Phenol	Toxic if inhaled or swallowed. Also, it is corrosive.
Acethophenon	With skin or eye contact can cause irritation. Dangerous if swallowed.
Chrome	It's carcinogenic, and toxic if swallowed.
Lead	Allergen for 1.7 % of the people. Can be irritating or can cause chemical burns.

Regarding the household products, most of the cleaning products produced in Macedonia do not have warning signs for toxic, flammable, explosive, corrosive, or oxidising characteristics of the product on their labels. Therefore, they are extremely dangerous to people and the environment, and if not handled properly can cause many negative effects.

**Description of how consumers are exposed to these toxic chemicals:**

In Macedonia there is no existing law for limiting chemical use in products (it should be adopted in 2011) and therefore many local cosmetics producers have the freedom to use any chemical. An example is the use of formaldehyde in shampoo, by one of our most famous cosmetic companies.

Additionally, due to uncontrolled import and lack of testing there are many products present at the market with suspicious or not specified content.

On a daily basis consumers are highly exposed to toxic chemicals by buying and using different cosmetics, household products or toys for children, not knowing about their ingredients and the potential hazardous effect that they have.

Women have a higher exposure rate, as they tend to use different kinds of cosmetics, such as make up and face/body creams. Children are most sensitive, due to the fact that the toys found in Macedonia have phthalates, which can cause reduction of spermatozooids, and atrophy of the testicles, as well as liver cancer; formaldehyde, which is found to be allergenic and a carcinogenic chemical; chrome and lead, which are also carcinogenic and toxic; benzene, which is carcinogenic and can affect the production of blood cells; and toluene, which can cause irritation if there is contact to the eyes or the skin.

Also, a lot of the toys have toxic chemicals that are highly volatile, so they circle in the air and can be absorbed through the skin.

Children's playgrounds in closed shopping malls or playhouses especially designed for celebrating birthdays are also places where children may play with dangerous toys. Many of these playgrounds are equipped with puzzle-mats placed on the floor, where children walk barefoot or touch with their hands.

**Description of how the product waste that contains the hazardous chemical(s) is handled:**

In Macedonia waste is still not separated or recycled in an organized way. We do not know how the waste containing hazardous chemicals are treated, and since there are no mechanisms in place we believe the waste ends up at the Skopje landfill. In Macedonia this is something that is very haphazard, and it's hard to get the needed information about waste of any kind. A lot of environmental organizations are working on lobbying for missing legislation about treating and managing the waste.

**Description of what information (or level of information) is available to consumers about the toxic chemicals in the product:**

In Macedonia there is very little, almost no information on the contents and on hazardous chemicals that exist in the products available to consumers. Moreover, consumers are not even aware of the harmful effects of certain chemicals in the products to themselves, their children and the environment.

Consumers don't have the habit of reading the ingredients because even if they do, they don't know what the chemicals mean, what are the effects to their health, or what is the meaning of the warning signs if there are any on the label.

Regarding the cleaning products, there aren't any warning signs about their toxicity, and there are only a few ingredients written on the labels.

Most of the toys, especially the ones imported from the Asian countries, don't have any declarations listing the necessary information about the toy.

### **Description of what types of similar products are available on the market, including safer alternatives:**

In Macedonia there are some brands and producers that can be found and which offer cosmetic products based on natural and safe ingredients, such as Lush, Nutri Vita, LaSoy, etc.

Eko-svest made an extensive research on possible safe alternatives, and we promoted many ways on preparing easy homemade cosmetics, cleaning agents and other products. All the recipes and advice can be found on the web site [www.toxic.mk](http://www.toxic.mk).

### **Project Outcomes:**

#### **Description of the activity conducted:**

- **Market research**

Eko-svest conducted a market research which was consisted of research in one large and one small market chain. In these markets we chose about 30 cosmetic products and 30 household products for further research.

The research resulted in a list of products, list of chemicals present in them, risks linked to the chemicals and alternative products.

Because of the shortage of warning signs on the household products (especially the home made products), we made a list of the warning signs, consisting of a picture and the explanation about what it means.

Also, according to the RAPEX (EU rapid alert system for all dangerous consumer products, with the exception of food, pharmaceutical and medical devices) list from the European Commission ([http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/dyna/rapex/rapex\\_archives\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/dyna/rapex/rapex_archives_en.cfm)), we've done a detailed screening in 3 large warehouses (which distribute toys to shops in Skopje), and found around 30 toys that are present on the RAPEX list and forbidden in the EU because of their toxic ingredients.

- **Website**

Eko-svest made a new web domain- **toxic.mk**, a web site that offers a lot of information and guidelines for the consumers. It contains four main menus:

1. Cosmetic products, where are the lists with the researched cosmetic products, as well as the hazardous effects from the chemicals found in them, are located.
2. Household products, where you can find the warning signs that one household product should have.
3. Toys, where you can find the list of toys found in toy markets, which are proved to be toxic according to the RAPEX list of European Commission.
4. Safe alternatives, where you can find a lot of recipes and advice on making your own cosmetic or household product.

- **Producing 500 printed guides**

The guides are intended for the consumer, to serve as a shopping guide through their choosing of products. It contains information about the chemical substances, their names, and harmful effects on health and the environment, as well as the toys found to be unsafe and toxic, and the warning signs for the household products.

- **Producing 200 posters**

The posters are intended for notifying consumers about the potential risks and introducing the web site. The posters were given to a few stores where products mentioned in the research can be found.

**Media work**

Because of the huge interest of the journalists about the whole project and research, we had a lot of promotion through the media:

- Five TV interviews/statements
- One radio coverage
- One press conference

**Impact on target groups:**

People/consumers are informed about the potential hazardous chemicals in products existing on the market and know of the existence of alternatives.

By being informed, consumers will take special care when choosing products and when choosing safe products consumers will protect their children, their health and the environment from the release of hazardous chemicals.

**Impact on target policies:**

As soon as we presented our results from the research, the governmental Sanitary and Health Inspectorate made a public promise in the written media to be more careful and to conduct more frequent controls, especially regarding the toys imported in our country. This statement is a result of our research and of spreading the information through the media about the toxic chemicals.

In February this year, the Custom administration and the governmental Sanitary and Health Inspectorate signed a collaboration memorandum, which confirms more careful and strict control of the products.

Also, by spreading information about the existing dangerous chemical substances in products in Macedonia to consumers, they become a critical mass that can request from the government stricter legislation and regulations in order to protect the consumer and the environment from the hazardous substances.

Eko-svest, as a non-governmental organization, will continue to do lobby work for missing legislation about restricted chemicals.

**Outreach to stakeholders:**

The Center for Protection of Consumer's Rights in Macedonia has been active in following toxic toys in the country. The collaboration and joint initiatives with the Center will continue in future

Toy shops which were interested in the toxic toys issue will also stay in touch with Eko-svest for any further updates of the lists.

**Deliverables, outputs and/or products:**

Products from the project are:

- 1 informative web site in Macedonian- [www.toxic.mk](http://www.toxic.mk)
- List of products researched (available at [www.toxic.mk](http://www.toxic.mk))
- List of toxic chemicals
- List of caution/warning signs
- List of safe alternatives
- 1 published guide in Macedonian in 500 copies
- 1 published poster in Macedonian in 200 copies

**Communication efforts:**



As a result of the research, we managed to inform the consumers about the results and the project itself through:

- 5 press releases published in national daily newspaper:
  - o Vest- front page (14.10.2010)
  - o Dnevnik- (14.10.2010, 15.10.2010)
  - o Utrinski Vesnik- front page (15.10.2010)
  - o Vreme- (15.10.2010)
- 14 releases in daily online version of newspapers (links in attachment)
- Presenting our work and all the information on TV show on national television MTM (16.02.2010, and 19.10.2010) and MTV (16.10.2010)
- 1 radio interview on Macedonian radio (24.06.2010)
- 2 short statements for 2 national televisions (Telma and Alsat)
- Organized 1 press conference on 14.10.2010, 6 journalists from the largest daily newspapers were present on this conference.

#### **NGO Recommendations for next steps:**

Eko-svest will continue working on raising awareness of toxic chemicals as well as lobbying for missing legislation. Our next step is research on mercury, its toxicity and sources to mercury.

We are going to present basic information and fact sheets available to officials, NGOs and public regarding the risks from mercury. Also, we are about to make testing on hair samples from people who will agree to be tested for presence of mercury and its amount.

All the information and results will be available on the existing web site [www.toxic.mk](http://www.toxic.mk), which will be expanded with one more menu for mercury.