

**ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE  
CHEMICALS AND BIOTECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**

**Future work on Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances (PFAS)**

**Meeting of the Chemicals and Biotechnology Committee**

5-7 November 2024 starting at 16h00 on 5 November  
OECD Conference Centre, 2 rue André Pascal, Paris, France

This document outlines achievements of the Global PFAS group over the last four years and proposes topical areas for continuation of work on PFAS during the period of 2025-2028. The proposed areas of activity have been discussed with the Global PFAS Group and the Working Party on Risk Management. Actual realisation of projects will depend on available resources.

**Action required:** *The Chemicals and Biotechnology Committee is invited to discuss the proposed project areas in paragraphs 10-24, indicate priorities and agree on the areas of activity for the Global PFAS Group for 2025-2028.*

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## Background

1. The Global PFAS Group was established in 2012 and the focus of the group has been on activities that facilitate sharing of information on risk management and a shift to safer alternatives. This has been the focus as the group was established in response to Resolution II/5 adopted by the International Conference on Chemicals Management, under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), calling upon intergovernmental organisations, governments and other stakeholders to: “*consider the development, facilitation and promotion in an open, transparent and inclusive manner of national and international stewardship programmes and regulatory approaches to reduce emissions and the content of relevant perfluorinated chemicals of concern in products and to work toward global elimination, where appropriate and technically feasible*”<sup>1</sup>.

2. A summary of the work that has been conducted at the OECD on PFAS can be found in the background document prepared for the [OECD Global Forum for the Environment on PFAS](#) that took place in February 2024.

3. During the 2021-2024 period the following has been accomplished at the OECD under the Global PFAS Group:

- Nine Reports and starting of two draft reports (available at: [Risk management, risk reduction and sustainable chemistry | OECD](#)) :
  1. Reconciling Terminology of the Universe of PFASs: Recommendations and Practical Guidance
  2. Fact Cards of Major Groups of PFASs
  3. Synthesis Report on Understanding Side-Chain Fluorinated Polymers and their Life Cycle
  4. Synthesis Report on Understanding Perfluoropolyethers and Their Life Cycle
  - 5-6. PFASs and Alternatives in Food Packaging (Paper and Paperboard): Commercial Availability and Current Uses & Hazard Profile of Alternatives
  - 7-8. PFAS and Alternatives in Coatings, Paints and Varnishes: Commercial Availability and Current Uses & Hazard Profile of Alternatives
  9. PFAS and Alternatives in Cosmetics: Commercial Availability and Current Uses
  10. Drafting started: Synthesis Report on Understanding of Fluoropolymers and their Life Cycle
  11. Drafting started: PFAS Alternatives in Hydraulic oils and lubricants
- Webinars (available at: [OECD webinars on Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances \(PFAS\) - YouTube](#)):
  - Advancing the knowledge on PFAS – Reports on Perfluoropolyethers and PFAS and Alternatives in cosmetics
  - Prevention of PFAS pollution and monitoring of PFAS environmental releases

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<https://www.chemicalsframework.org/sites/default/files/Documents/meetings/ICCM2/doc/ICCM2%2015%20FINAL%20REPORT%20E.pdf>

- Advances in Understanding Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances
- Moving to Safer Alternatives
- Recent risk reduction initiatives for PFASs
- Reconciling Terminology of the Universe of PFAS: Recommendations and Practical Guidance
- Ongoing, periodic update regarding risk management approaches for PFAS by countries (available at: [Risk management, risk reduction and sustainable chemistry | OECD](#)). On our previous web platform, this was one of the most viewed pages of the OECD Environment Directorate.
- Hosting of a Global Forum for the Environment on PFAS in February 2024 which covered various topics related to risk management of PFAS and brought together ~135 in-person and 1100 on-line participants (available at: [Global Forum on the Environment dedicated to Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances \(PFAS\) | OECD](#)).

4. Building on the past focus and accomplishments of the group, the next phase of work of the group for 2025-2028 is outlined in this document. The project areas build on the strengths of the group and priorities identified by countries and other stakeholders. The Global PFAS Group and the Working Party on Risk Management have been consulted.

5. As noted above, the Global PFAS Group (initially the OECD/UNEP Global PFC Group) was established to support the achievement of resolutions regarding PFAS under the Strategic Approach to Chemicals Management (SAICM). However, it was not an official group under the SAICM process. The group has been functioning as an informal group of experts of the OECD with wider participation by a range of stakeholders. In September 2023, the [Global Framework on Chemicals](#) (GFC) was adopted by the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Chemicals Management, building upon and strengthening commitments on international chemicals management post-SAICM. The GFC contains provisions regarding Issues of Concern and a process for conduct of work on Issues of Concern. As agreed by ICCM5 in resolution V/5 ([link](#)) the continuation of work under the GFC on any of the SAICM Emerging Policies Issues (EPIs) or Other Issues of Concern, including PFAS, will be decided at the next Conference planned for December 2026.

6. The potential role of the OECD in the work of Issues of Concern and specifically in the context of continuation of work on EPIs and Other Issues of Concern under the GFC, will be discussed by the Chemicals and Biotechnology Committee at its meeting in November 2024 [[ENV/CBC\(2024\)26](#)]. Therefore, there is a possibility that the nature of the work on PFAS at the OECD could change and be influenced by the GFC discussions over the next two years.

7. However, in the planning of activities for the next four years, it is presupposed that countries will want to continue to work on PFAS risk management. This can be revisited as the GFC discussions evolve.

### Identification of work areas of the Global PFAS Group for 2025-2028

8. Taking into account past work and discussions of the Global PFAS group, as well as drawing on discussions at the OECD Global Forum for the Environment on PFAS, a list of possible future activities was compiled (see Annex A). In June 2024, members of the Global PFAS Group were invited to discuss the list during a call of the group to identify

topics of most interest. They also had the opportunity to provide feedback on priority topics through a Microsoft Forms survey.

9. The Working Party on Risk Management (WPRM) discussed the proposed topics for inclusion in the 2025 – 2028 work programme at its meeting in September 2024 [ENV/CBC/RM(2024)6]. The results from these discussions are integrated into the proposed activities below.

### Proposed activities of the Global PFAS Group for the 2025 – 2028 period

10. The following topical areas are proposed for future work of the Global PFAS Group. The details of each activity would be further expanded with the Global PFAS group and will also depend on financial resourcing of the work.

***Activity 1: Continue to share risk management approaches through collection of information across countries and sharing these on the OECD website and through periodic webinars;***

11. Since its beginning, the Global PFAS Group has been collecting and sharing information on risk management approaches across countries. Once a year a request is sent to the Global PFAS Group as well as to the WPRM, for countries to provide information on their recent activities for risk management of PFAS. This information is shared on the OECD website at <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/risk-management-risk-reduction-and-sustainable-chemistry.html>. It is also proposed to now include a request to share information on regulations for PFAS in air and water in this compilation.

12. Note that a specific OECD PFAS portal was maintained for years, however in July 2024 the OECD web platform underwent a major transformation. A specific PFAS page is planned to be released later this year under the risk management topical page. Currently country information and documents are available on the risk management page.

13. Webinars are also regularly organised with countries or regions presenting on their recent risk management approaches for PFAS. The recording of webinars is available at: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJNHHjqEVIIfGy\\_LRF756bxx4pbF4nt8L](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJNHHjqEVIIfGy_LRF756bxx4pbF4nt8L).

14. It is proposed to continue these activities as part of the next work programme 2025 – 2028 with a focus on expanding the number of countries providing information. Also, the number of webinars hosted by the group in 2021-2024 was lower than in the past. This was also due to a high volume of PFAS webinars being offered by a broad range of other organisations. The secretariat would continue to aim to identify value-added topics for OECD webinars on this topic (outputs of the group, latest developments on risk management approaches, insights to inform risk management).

***Activity 2: Following-up on the Synthesis Report on Fluoropolymers (under development), compile and share information on fluoropolymers (uses & alternatives) and emissions of PFAS and other fluorinated substances from fluoropolymers production***

15. The Global PFAS Group is currently developing a report on *Understanding Fluoropolymers and their Life Cycle*, which is planned to be finalized in Q1 2025. The synthesis report covers:

- chemical identities of fluoropolymers on the global market, providing an overview of general structural categorization, a closer analysis of the chemical identities of

some individual fluoropolymers, and challenges and opportunities in fluoropolymer identification and characterisation;

- an investigation of the life cycle of fluoropolymers, with a focus on (1) historical and ongoing production and uses, (2) presence of other PFAS in commercial formulations, (3) degradation of fluoropolymers during use and after end-of-life, and (4) environmental releases of fluoropolymers and related impurities.
- an overarching summary of the findings and options for future research and policy measures.

16. In order to address the priority area identified, future work could focus on continuing to include the collection of information on uses of fluoropolymers and their alternatives in the context of the topical area below. Also, following the finalisation of the synthesis report, further work could be discussed on particular gaps that were not addressed in the report that could be filled by more research including on emissions from the production of fluoropolymers.

***Activity 3: Continue the analysis of information on suitable and available alternatives focusing on specific industry sectors***

17. In the past years, reports have been developed on commercial availability and current uses of alternatives as well as with information on the hazard profile of the identified alternatives. The reports covered three sectors: food packaging and paperboard, coatings, paints and varnishes and cosmetics. Another report is currently under development focusing on hydraulic oils and lubricants.

18. It is proposed to continue this activity in the next work programme. The Global PFAS Group will be consulted to provide advice on the sectors of most interest. The information collected as part of the EU restriction proposal and other national activities will be taken into account to avoid duplication of work.

***Activity 4: Potential consideration: Develop a report on risk of PFAS to the circular economy***

19. It is proposed to develop a report that would examine the impact of PFAS on the development of a “safe” circular economy, in particular how the presence of PFAS in products affects the recycling process, what are the main causes of concern and what solutions exist focusing on specific sectors of relevance, to be identified. It could also consider how risk management approaches and the development of alternatives to PFAS in certain products have allowed for a safer life cycle management.

20. In discussions of this topic, it was raised that perhaps this issue is not unique to PFAS but to many other regulated substances as well. Therefore, if this activity is taken up, a careful scoping of the potential report should be made.

***Activity 5: Potential consideration: Dissemination of information on analytical methods***

21. The topic of both standardisation and dissemination of analytical methods have been raised as priority areas. However, development and standardisation of methods are going on in several other venues and projects and such expertise is not typically within the Global PFAS group.

22. Regarding dissemination of analytical methods, potential activities could include:

- developing good practices for communicating the results from analyses conducted in different environmental media, particularly the relevance of total PFAS or total fluorine measurements in the context of regulatory decision-making;
- sharing of analytical methods developed within the research arms of governments or those adopted by countries.

***Activity 6: Potential consideration: Sharing of Remediation Methods***

23. There is a gap in knowledge regarding remediation methods. Similar to the standardization or dissemination of analytical methods, this expertise is not typically in the Global PFAS group. However, a project could be proposed to develop an activity to share information on existing remediation methods and ongoing research across countries, with a particular focus on the research arms of governments.

***Communication of identified priority area with the Working Party on Hazard Assessment (WPHA): Collect and share information contributing to risk assessment of PFAS – grouping, exposure, hazards***

24. As the WPHA has continued to share information on grouping approaches for assessment of PFAS, it is proposed that this priority area is notified to the WPHA for them to consider in the context of the overall work of the WPHA.

## Annex A. Initial list of project areas discussed by the Global PFAS Group

An initial list of project areas were compiled from the previous work of the group, discussions with delegates and feedback at the Global Forum for the Environment on PFAS. These three bins of activities were presented to the Global PFAS Group for their input on priorities.

### 1. **Topical areas most aligned with current focus of the group and the mandate of OECD's Working Party on Risk Management:**

#### *Sharing of risk management approaches across countries & regions*

- Continue to share risk management approaches through collection of information across countries and sharing these on the OECD website and through periodic webinars;
- Organise bi-annual (every two years) in-person events similar to the Global Forum that took place in February 2024 to focus on risk management approaches across countries and other specific areas as identified;
- Further support emerging economies and developing countries in transition to PFAS free production and consumption;
- Collect and share information specifically about PFAS regulations for water and air.

#### *Prioritisation of PFAS for risk management*

- Consider how prioritization could inform PFAS risk management considering aspects such as volumes, releases, uses and hazards, grouping, to focus on the most impactful risk management approaches.

#### *Further harmonisation of the nomenclature*

- Following-up from past work on the terminology of PFAS and the Fact Cards, it is proposed to harmonise acronyms used within the PFAS universe based on a standardized nomenclature. This would include acronyms for emerging PFAS.

#### *Risk management of fluoropolymers*

- Following up on the Synthesis Report on Fluoropolymers (under development) compile and share information on fluoropolymers (uses & alternatives) and emissions of PFAS and other fluorinated substances from fluoropolymers production.

### *Alternatives*

- Continue the analysis of information on suitable and available alternatives focusing on specific industry sectors. This could also include how to support innovation and scale-up and monitor transition;
- Collect good practices for knowledge transfer of safer alternatives technologies to PFAS.

### *Socioeconomic Impacts*

- Articulating and communicating the relation of the polluter pays principle specifically to PFAS;
- Develop a PFAS cost of inaction report.

## **2. Topical areas that would broaden current focus of the group:**

### *Analytical methods*

- Standardisation and/or dissemination of analytical methods: standards for proper identification and detection of PFAS in different media;
- Compile in an easy communicable format information on biomonitoring methods.

### *Responsible manufacturing*

- Collect best practice examples for site management and develop guidelines on responsible manufacturing. This would include perspectives on safety of workers and occupational exposure;
- Work on emission limit values to minimize emissions across industry.

### *Circular economy and life cycle perspectives*

- Develop a report on risk of PFAS to the circular economy;
- Develop a report looking at different recycling methods for different product types containing PFAS (e.g. for electronics).

### *Risk communication*

- Improve risk communication of PFAS – including hazards, exposure, risk, perceptions and uncertainty. This could include to collect and synthesise best practices in risk communication for PFAS.



### **3. Topical area on hazard/risk assessment:**

*Note that this topic was discussed in the formation of the last 4-year workplan for PFAS. It was then agreed that OECD's Working Party on Hazard Assessment would share information on a periodic basis on approaches on grouping of PFAS for hazard assessment. This has occurred through information sharing on relevant domestic activities at the WPRM. If this area is of priority, it would be for the WPHA to take forward.*

- Collect and share information contributing to risk assessment of PFAS – grouping, exposure, hazards

Results from the identification of priority activities by the Global PFAS Group indicated the following topics as the five top priorities. Note that while a cost of inaction report was of interest to some, it was not included in the survey as in the call of the Global PFAS Group, members highlighted that it was already being addressed through the work of others:

- Continue to share risk management approaches through collection of information across countries and sharing these on the OECD website and through periodic webinars;
- Following-up on the Synthesis Report on Fluoropolymers (under development), compile and share information on fluoropolymers (uses & alternatives) and emissions of PFAS and other fluorinated substances from fluoropolymers production;
- Continue the analysis of information on suitable and available alternatives focusing on specific industry sectors;
- Standardisation and/or dissemination of analytical methods: standards for proper identification and detection of PFAS in different media;
- Develop a report on risk of PFAS to the circular economy.