

## BREFs



IMAGE: © Emrah Turudu

## The First Series of BREFs Finalised and the Reviews On Track

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Early in 2007, the European IPPC Bureau (EIPPCB) finalised the BREF on Surface Treatment using Organic Solvents, the last of an initial series of 32 documents elaborated in the framework of implementation of the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) Directive (96/61/EC).

This marks a major achievement for the EIPPCB. It was created about ten years ago in order to elaborate reference documents on Best Available Techniques (BAT) – the BAT Reference Documents (BREFs) – in order to fulfill the obligation of the Commission stipulated in Article 16(2) of the IPPC Directive. During the last ten years, over 1,200 experts representing Member States, industry and environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from all over Europe, led by EIPPCB staff worked on these 32 BREF documents. These documents are of the utmost importance both for industry and environmental regulators in the EU since they contain conclusions on what are considered to be BAT for all the industrial and agricultural sectors covered by the Directive. IPPC installations may only operate according to permit conditions based on BAT. Competent authorities have to take into account the BREFs generally, or specifically, when determining BAT.

### Where to Find BREFs

BREFs are made available to the general public on the European IPPC Bureau website (<http://eippcb.jrc.es/>). In 2006, this website registered over 60,000 BREF downloads from all over the world, which shows the very high interest generated by these reference documents. In addition, BREFs are often quoted or referenced in specialised press, in PhD theses, in international conferences and workshops on the reduction of the environmental impact of industrial and agricultural activities. BREFs are also used by financial organisations (eg the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank) in order to decide on grants to help finance industrial projects.

BAT are dynamic by nature due to changes in scientific knowledge and understanding, developments in technology (and cost of technology) and methods of operation, so the BREFs need to be periodically reviewed. The review process started in 2005 with the BREF on Cement and Lime. In 2006, the reviews of the Iron and Steel, Pulp and Paper and Glass BREFs were launched. The reviews of the BREFs on Tanneries and Non-Ferrous Metals started in early 2007, and the review of the BREF on Ferrous Metals and the BREF on Common Waste Water and Waste Gas Treatment should be started later on in 2007. It is envisaged that BREFs will be reviewed at a pace of about four per year.

### A Sustainable Strategy

The IPPC Directive is one of the key community instruments for sustainable production and environmental protection in Europe. It aims to achieve the integrated control of energy, water and raw material consumption as well as the prevention of pollution to water, air and soil, arising from about 55,000 industrial installations across Europe. The Directive, which came into force in October 1999, lays down a framework that requires EU Member States to issue operating permits for certain types of installations carrying out industrial activities – as detailed in Annex 1 to the Directive. The Directive is to be fully applied to existing installations no later than October 2007. The Directive is currently under review by the Commission.

The European IPPC Bureau is part of the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. The IPTS is located in Seville, Spain, and its mission is to provide customer-driven support to the EU policy-making process by researching science-based responses to policy challenges that have both a socio-economic and a scientific or technological dimension. ●

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