

Report

Tackling PFAS pollution through a pro-active and systemic approach - ANTWERP

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Moderator: Jan Hautekiet

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Subject: Plenary KIS session: Knowledge Centre on Innovative Remediation Solutions
KIS vzw - A new community to spur innovation, cooperation and knowledge on substances of very high concern

1 *Launching of Knowledge Centre on Innovative Remediation Solutions (KIS vzw)*

2 STRONGER THROUGH JOINING FORCES

The focus of the session was the launching of the KIS knowledge centre. The main goal of the KIS knowledge centre is to support the development and implementation of solutions for substance of very high concern that are present in the environment. There are four underlying aspects related to this goal, being: 1) centralizing of knowledge that is currently scattered among different actors and organization that all working hard to find solutions for the issues they were confronted with; 2) KIS aims to connect different actors in the field, and 3) stimulate exchange of knowledge and lessons learned to accelerate the availability and implementation of solution. 4) Fourthly, for compounds like PFAS, solutions are not yet available for all aspects of the problem. Besides adaption of classical technologies there is need for new technologies. The KIS knowledge centre wants to support this innovation via studies and cofounding of development and demonstration projects. The first call for proposals was launched mid January 2024.

KIS is a network of organizations that are active in finding technological solutions for substances like PFAS in the environment. Authorities, companies and knowledge institutes are joining forces to establish KIS and realise its

goals in collaboration with society. KIS started in October 2023 with 13 founding members and 9 new members already joined since.

During the session, the floor was given to a representative of each of the three pillars. They shared with the audience their activities and their needs that were the basis for the establishment of the KIS knowledge centre.

- Werner Annaert from OVAM represented the authorities; he explained how OVAM deals with the PFAS crisis and why KIS plays an important role in it.
- Johan Gemoets from VITO represented the knowledge institutes. At several Flemish knowledge institutes innovative remediation and purification technologies are being developed. Johan is also the president of the governance board of KIS and gave also more details about mission and activities of the KIS Knowledge centre.
- The companies were represented by An Smet from ENVISAN, who spoke in name of the Flemish remediation sector OVB (association of remediation enterprises). She emphasized that relevant knowledge and solutions for PFAS in the environment are available among the Flemish companies.

The fourth speaker, Anna Krzywoszynska from University Oulu in Finland, looked at the KIS knowledge centre from a European perspective with focus on social aspects. She identified similarities between the KIS knowledge centre and living labs.

The excursions that KIS organized in the afternoon were briefly introduced by the KIS manager, Leen Bastiaens. Two parallel excursions (in total for 130 participants) were organized to visit monitoring and remediation activities in the vicinity of Antwerp.

Questions:

- For Johan: Can organization outside Flanders be part of KIS project proposals? → KIS call for projects are focused on Flemish organizations. Collaboration at international level is envisioned by KIS rather via for instance participation in European calls.
- For An: A person in the audience did not agree with the statement that the Flemish sector is ready to tackle PFAS contamination today. → An did clarify that in Flanders companies are ready to offer solutions to avoid that large infrastructure works like Oosterwheel need to be postponed. So for the most urgent needs solutions were developed, but the need for innovative technologies exists to cope with all aspects of the PFAS problem.
- For Werner: The temporary Action Framework, that states assessment values for use of PAF-containing soil materials and for the fulfillment of the remediation criteria was put in place in 2023. The framework as experienced as good tool to move forward. A question was posted whether the framework will stay in place for a long time. → As stated in the name, the framework is a temporary action. A code of good practice will be elaborated in 2024.
- Does KIS foresee collaboration with existing networks? → yes, the aim of KIS is to centralize knowledge and avoid scattering of activities. Therefore, KIS is open to collaborate with existing organizations and join forces.
- Is KIS also involved in finding alternatives for PFAS? → Focus of KIS is finding solutions for PFAS that is already in the environment. Finding alternatives for PFAS is another important aspect of finding solutions for PFAS, but this is not within the scope of KIS.

Take home messages:

- The PFAS crisis did create a momentum for collaboration and for initiatives towards innovation, including the establishment of the new Knowledge centre on Innovative remediation Solution (KIS) and the availability of funds to support development and demonstration projects to accelerate the
- In Flanders a significant amount of good knowledge and experience is available related to purification and remediation of PFAS in the environment. By joining forces and centralizing the knowledge progress can be made. Actors in Flanders showed to be interested in becoming member of the KIS vzw for this purpose. It is now up to the KIS network to become a safe place for data and to stimulate collaboration and innovation.
- Also the international community was pleased with the concept of the KIS knowledge centre in Flanders where authorities, companies and knowledge institutes join forces. they see potential for expanding this in time to European level.

ANNEX 1 -PRESENTATIONS

- KIS – Leen Bastiaens
- Public Waste Agency of Flanders (OVAM) - Werner Annaert - General Manager
- Flemish Institute of Technological Research (VITO) – Johan Gemoets
- Remediation sector OVB (association of remediation enterprises) - An Smet
- University Oulu, scientific expert and member of Soil Mission Board European Commission - Professor Anna Krzywoszynska

ANNEX 2 - EXCURSIONS

- Presentation Technology excursion
- Presentation excursion region Zwijndrecht
- Contribution of Steven Vervaet (Alderman Zwijndrecht) to the Zwijndrecht excursion.