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The European IPPC Bureau; what is it, where is it and what does it do.

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1 What is the EIPPCB?

1.1 The EIPPCB can be seen from three angles.

1. Firstly it is a project identified within the fifth framework program of the European Commission to carry out the technical work required by our colleagues in the Commission Services and in particular those of DGs Environment and Enterprise.
2. Secondly the EIPPCB is a unique group of people, each an expert in his or her own right recruited to work within the IPTS on the EIPPCB project. Their individual expertise on process engineering and environmental permitting supplement their specific expertise on one or more of the subject work areas being covered by the EIPPCB to create a multi-national team of people dedicated to producing quality reference documents to assist the efficient and effective implementation of the IPPC Directive.
3. Thirdly from the view of all our experts in all our Technical Working Groups the EIPPCB is a focal point for all relevant knowledge and information to be discussed at a technical level with other renowned experts. This is the catalytic function of the EIPPCB although few would claim that the catalyst is unchanged in the process itself. The staff are a mix of longer term Commission employees and Detached National Experts who rotate on a shorter term basis bringing specific expertise into the EIPPCB team and eventually leaving to return to their home employer with a unique European experience to add to their CV and to the expertise of their employer.

2 Where is the EIPPCB?

Geographically everyone will know from the title of the conference if they didn't know already that the EIPPCB is located in the beautiful city of Sevilla, capital of Andalusia. More importantly the EIPPCB is located within the European Commission's Joint Research Center in the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS), Unit Technologies for Sustainable Development. IPTS was established in 1994 with the mandate to provide prospective policy support to the policy-making process of the European Union. IPTS maintains the European Science and Technology Observatory (ESTO network) which links together more than 30 renowned research orientated organisations for the benefit of the European Community. Having the EIPPCB within the IPTS provides excellent opportunities for synergy with other projects undertaken in IPTS which include for example work on global energy and environmental issues, and competitiveness of industry.

3 What does the EIPPCB do?

3.1 The tasks undertaken by the EIPPCB fall into a number of categories.

1. All meetings of the Technical Working Groups constituted under the umbrella of the information exchange are organised and run by the EIPPCB. As one would expect this includes the preparatory paperwork, the technical presentations, the administrative arrangements and the records of the meetings. Normally only two plenary TWG meetings are held, one towards the beginning of the work of a TWG and one towards the final drafting stage.
2. The individual staff in the EIPPCB each have one or more subject areas on which to focus. Thus each EIPPCB expert member acts as a leader of the work of one or more TWG, communicating on a day to day basis with their respective TWG members to collect and validate information and maintain momentum in the progressing work both in terms of the TWG as a whole and where the TWG spawns sub-groups for specific subjects.
3. The EIPPCB receives and catalogues all the technical background material submitted to the TWGs which is then accessible to visitors to the EIPPCB offices. The EIPPCB cannot act as a library service for these background documents for many reasons including copyright.
4. A major task for the EIPPCB is to create the first draft of each BREF. It is not simply a cut and paste exercise from the submissions received, it is a case of validating the statements and data as far as possible and distilling the essential content of a BREF from the submitted information. In particular the EIPPCB seek to avoid political messages and focus instead on sound technical information and fact. This aspect is crucial to the technical credibility of the BREFs produced so they will withstand scrutiny at all levels.
5. To enhance the accuracy and credibility of the drafts another major step in the drafting is to prepare and send the draft out to the TWG for further validation and comments. In the pursuit of transparency the EIPPCB also puts all its draft BREFs onto the internet site for anyone in the world to view.
6. Draft and maintain a record of these formal communications. The TWG and any support groups established behind individual TWG members are recognised as experts so their views are all important to the successful outcome of the exercise. Above all, this is an exchange of information between the TWG members and here the EIPPCB acts as a catalyst to promote such exchange of information in the TWGs.
7. This logically leads to a redrafting of the document itself in light of comments made and further submissions of information. Here it is also quite logical that the comments which are well argued and explained are those which are most likely to result in changes to the draft BREF. Comments such as „the paragraph

is wrong" or „I disagree" cannot be expected to receive much sympathy without some explanation as to what is wrong and why the disagreement. Preferably in both cases an alternative solution is proposed and also explained. This whole cycle of drafting – consultation and redrafting is repeated at least twice and is extremely time consuming. Ultimately late information cannot generally be included in a BREF due to the time it would take to validate and consult on the information. Equally this exercise is not a form of committee negotiation but an exchange of technical information which should lead to sound conclusions based upon that information.

8. Validation of information and data is crucial to product quality in the case of BREFs. This is achieved by checking different sources, through the consultation procedures and through a number of selected site visits where the EIPPCB expert can discuss directly with operators and suppliers on key issues. Most of the EIPPCB staff are or have been inspectors or permit writers and seeing the techniques applied for real with the opportunity to talk with the operators is proving invaluable.
9. Of course it is an important task of the EIPPCB to report regularly to our Commission customers and to the IEF with the eventual presentation of each final draft BREF to the IEF for scrutiny, questioning and endorsement. The EIPPCB and each TWG is tasked with producing a BREF on specific subjects and the IEF need to maintain an overview of the whole exercise if the product BREFs are to be fully endorsed and accepted by all concerned when they are finished. Note that we use the words endorsed and accepted rather than agreed because full agreement on all points of detail is somewhat over optimistic.
10. In addition to the core work of creating BREFs the EIPPCB receives a constant stream of general enquiries from people worldwide interested in the technical work and the IPPC Directive. Whilst it is gratifying that the world recognises the unique expertise of the EIPPCB team, our resources are limited and work focuses on the BREFs and the work of the TWGs. However as shown by this conference we are in the business of promoting the principles of IPPC, BAT and BREFs so you will find the EIPPCB participating in some shape or form at a great many such events.
11. Partly in order to handle the vast amount of information and partly to ease the problems of communication over distance and time zones, the EIPPCB and IPTS use the internet as a key communications tool. The EIPPCB homepage is maintained with some general information about IPPC and the work program, the text of the Directive, staff contact details and of course the draft BREFs themselves. IPTS has advanced informatics systems constantly supported by our own IT specialists but unfortunately the web suffers from its own success. There are elements of web performance beyond control of any single web user and we have even gone to the extent of providing a user guide specifically to all our TWG members but also available to casual website visitors

to assist the transfer of information over the internet. We are constantly exploiting new systems and operating practices in light of our experiences with handling such vast amounts of information.

4 Conclusion

From this presentation I hope you will see that the EIPPCB created by the IPTS is a centre of technical excellence staffed by highly motivated individuals, some of whom you will shortly hear from individually. The EIPPCB builds on the excellence of IPTS and the series of BREFs are something we can feel proud of.