

Needs Assessment of European Chemicals Focal Points



Summary

Based on Interviews Conducted in April–May 2025

July 2025

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Introduction

This document summarizes the expressed needs, challenges, and support requirements identified by National and NGO Focal Points under the [Global Framework on Chemicals \(GFC\)](#) and [the Ad-hoc open-ended working group on a Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution Prevention \(SPP\)](#)/ new established [Intergovernmental Science Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution \(ISP-CWP\)](#). The insights stem from a series of interviews with Focal Points and further experts for the first phase of the MSP Institute's project „Know-How for European Chemicals Focal Points“.

Background

Project „Know-How for European Chemicals Focal Points“

Project duration: 15/02/2025 – 30/04/2027

The new project of the [MSP Institute](#) aims to minimise the negative environmental and health impacts of hazardous chemicals by better integrating the needs and expertise of all relevant stakeholders into chemicals management in Europe and promoting their equal cooperation. To this end, the expertise of National and NGO Focal Points of the Global Framework on Chemicals and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution is to be strengthened through training on multi-stakeholder processes with a human rights focus. In addition to promoting skills for stakeholder participation and cooperation, the project aims to raise awareness of gender-specific risks and teach skills for taking gender aspects into account in chemicals management. The project offers online trainings and a final workshop, thereby supporting networking and exchange opportunities for the Focal Points and aiding implementation at the national level. Learning outcomes, implementation experiences, and best-practice examples will be documented and made available to all relevant stakeholders in chemicals management for long-term use.

The MSP Institute is supported by the [Gender & Chemicals Partnership \(G&CP\)](#), and in particular by the G&CP Working Group on 'Education & Training', in the various activities to achieve the project outputs.

This document marks the beginning of the project's first phase and will serve as a foundational guide for the development of the upcoming training sessions.

Methodology

- **Interviewees:**
Four interviews with European Chemicals Focal Points (two National Focal Points of the GFC, one NGO Focal Point of the GFC, and one National Focal Point of the SPP/ISP-CWP) three interviews with experts (one Gender National Focal Point of the CBD Convention, two experts on gender equality and diversity)
- **Method:** Semi structured interviews (online via zoom)
- **Documentation:** Recording and interview notes

- **Limitations:** This summary is based on interviews with only four out of 139 European Chemicals Focal Points, which significantly limits the generalizability of the findings. The primary objective of the interviews was to gain an initial understanding of the needs and challenges faced by European Chemicals Focal Points. A comprehensive or representative analysis was not intended. Rather, the findings serve as a qualitative starting point for further reflection and discussion with the focal points.

Who Are the Chemicals Focal Points?

National Focal Points (NFPs) in the context of UN conventions are designated officials or entities within a country that serve as the primary contact points for coordinating and implementing international agreements or conventions. They play a crucial role in ensuring that the country meets its obligations under these conventions, facilitating communication with the international community, and coordinating national activities aligned with the convention's objectives. Both the GFC and the SPP/ISP-CWP utilize the Focal Point System for their coordination and implementation. Unlike most UN conventions, the GFC also involves other Focal Points of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Intergovernmental Organizations (IGO), reflecting its multi-stakeholder approach.

Focal Points in the GFC:

The predecessor to the GFC – the Strategic Approach for International Chemicals Management (SAICM) – established the foundational structure for National, IGO and NGO Focal Points in global chemicals governance, aiming to facilitate communication, coordination, and implementation of actions. The [Global Plan of Action \(2006\)](#) called for their establishment under the 'Capacity-building, education, and training' work area, tasking them with promoting coordination and information exchange among stakeholders involved in chemical safety. Further responsibilities are outlined in various SAICM documents, including the [SAICM/UCT HHP Factsheet \(2022\)](#). The GFC builds on SAICM, with the Framework text calling for the designation of National Focal Points to facilitate communication and coordination, disseminate information, consult with stakeholders, and represent national structures at meetings.

Key Responsibilities:

- Serve as liaisons to the GFC Secretariat.
- Coordinate national implementation and reporting on GFC targets.
- Facilitate multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral engagement.
- In addition, GFC Focal Points will also be responsible to support gender mainstreaming in line with [ICCM5 Resolution V/4](#) once the GFC Gender Action will have been adopted, as envisaged for the 1st International Conference to be held in 2026.

ICCM5 [Resolution V/7](#) reaffirmed the need for detailed guidelines. These were developed in the [Draft Guidelines for National Focal Points](#) in June 2024, and were further discussed at the GFC OEWG1 in June 2025. The adoption is envisaged for the 1st International Conference (2026).

A list of all GFC Focal Points can be found [here](#).

Focal Points in the SPP/ ISP-CWP:

In the SPP/ ISP-CWP, National Focal Points act as the official channel of communication between governments and the Secretariat of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on a Science-Policy Panel, contributing to the sound management of chemicals and waste and the prevention of pollution, including for written submissions and statements. They are expected to participate in group sessions and serve as a contact point between the Secretariat and their national government.

As the Science-Policy Panel is still in the process of being developed, the role and tasks of future Focal Points need to be further discussed. Therefore, no additional guidance is available as of yet.

A list of all SPP/ISP-CWP National Points can be found [here](#).

Chemicals Focal Points - A Women's Job?

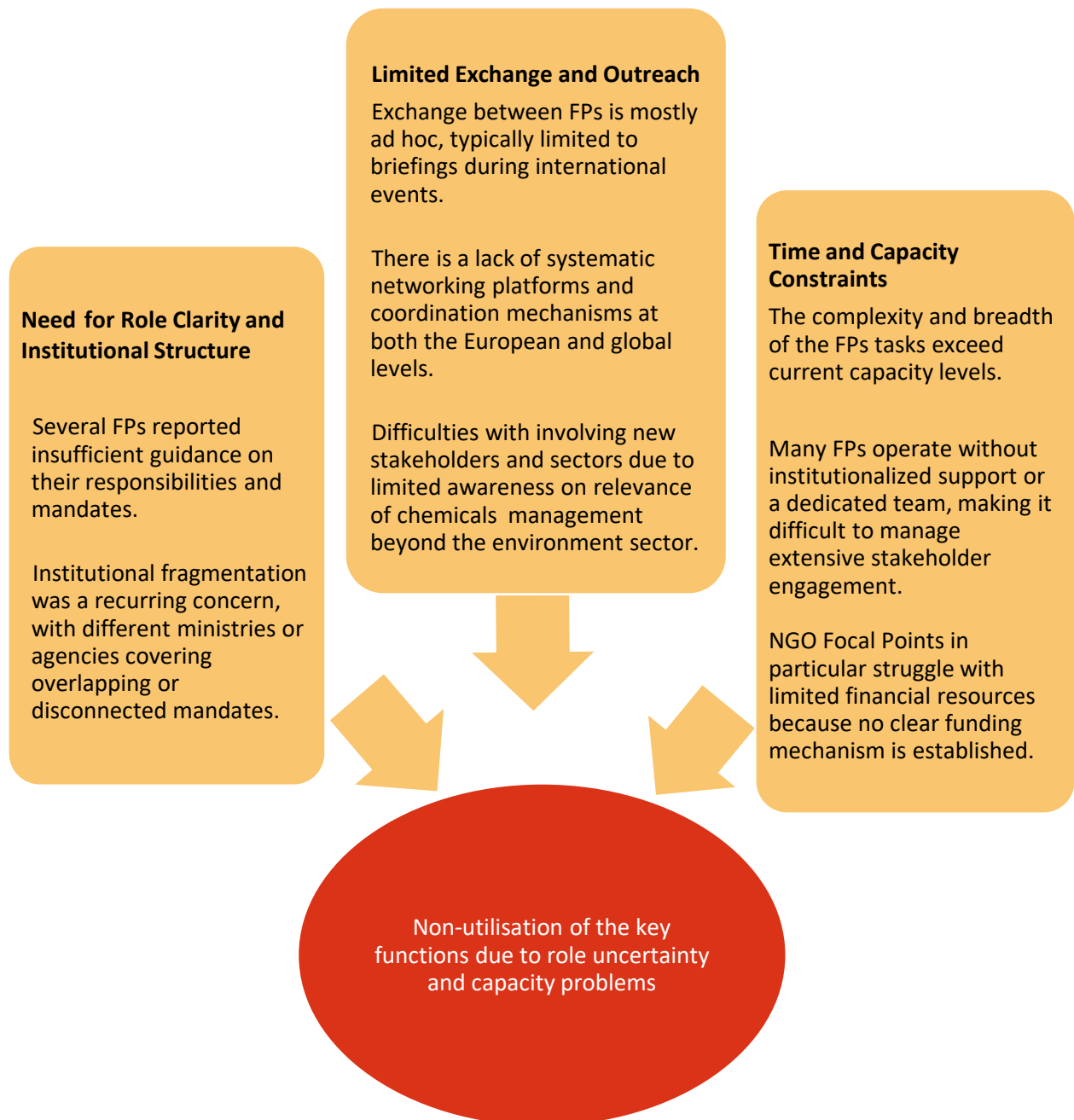
In Europe, women are represented twice as often as men in the role of National and NGO Chemicals Focal Points (status of May 2025). Exploring the reasons behind this gender distribution could provide valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges that Focal Points may encounter in their roles and tasks.

	European National Focal Points GFC	European NGO Focal Points GFC ¹	European National Focal Points SPP/ ISP-CWP	All European Chemicals Focal Points
female	29	21	44	94 (67,6%)
male	19	11	15	45 (32,4%)

¹ Under European NGO Focal Points, we understand non-governmental organizations of different stakeholder groups (civil society, research, private sector, labour associations etc.) that are based in Europe and work on the national or European policy level.

What Are Their Overarching Challenges?

The Chemicals Focal Points (FPs) interviewed face a range of overarching challenges that hinder their effectiveness and collaboration. Overall, the Focal Points call for more structure, clarity, and support in order to be effective agents of change within complex, cross-sectoral policy environments.



Key Needs for Training and Exchange Identified

In the interviews the Chemicals Focal Points expressed the following training needs and interests in exchange:

Training Needs on Multi-Stakeholder Processes

- Communication with and outreach to new stakeholders or sectors
- Power imbalances and conflicting interests between stakeholders
- Training in moderation and facilitation
- Self-reflection on one's own role

Training Needs on Gender

- Basic understanding of gender concepts / introduction in gender terminology
- Guidance on gender mainstreaming
- Best practices for implementation and gender activities
- Reflection of own situation: Women in Focal Point Roles
- Role of women as agents of change
- Linkages to gender medicine

Exchange & Networking

- Desire for stronger national and international exchange and lasting communication channels
- Interest in topic-specific dialogue and peer learning
- Wish to increase mutual awareness of ongoing national and regional activities and to identify shared objectives
- Interest in other Focal Points' backgrounds, institutional settings, and working methods
- Foster transnational cooperation with neighbouring countries or countries with similar institutional landscapes

Suggestions for Training Formats and Methods

The following suggestions for the training formats were mentioned in the interviews:

- Input from practitioners (not just theorists)
- Focus on concrete, cross-country challenges
- Interactive, thematic exchange forums
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- Creation or use of direct tools for peer exchange: mailing lists, shared resource repositories, structured networking platforms (e.g., Mural, Miro, surveys)
- Reflection questions between sessions
- Develop training focus topics jointly over time to address challenges and needs flexibly

Conclusions and Next Steps

The interviews underscored a strong interest in enhanced capacity building and structured exchange. The MSP Institute is planning to respond to this interest via the projects next steps:

- Launch of six, monthly trainings, on multi-stakeholder processes and gender mainstreaming
- Moderated exchange space for EU Chemicals Focal Points
- Coaching sessions for national implementation activities
- In-person workshop for learning exchange and reflection



With these next steps the project aims to empower Chemicals Focal Points to act as effective agents of change for equal participation processes. While the project is currently focused exclusively on European Focal Points, the courses, materials, and methods to be developed are intended to be adaptable for use in other regions, and we hope to be able to offer courses for non-European Focal Points soon in the future.

If you're interested in taking part in the project or in discussing this needs assessment, our project issues and activities, please do let us know!

Contact us via **info(at)msp-institute.org**.

You can find more information about us and our work at our websites:

On the linkages of gender and chemicals: <https://gender-chemicals.org/>

On the Gender & Chemicals Partnership: <https://gandcp.org/>

On the MSP Institute eV: <https://msp-institute.org/>