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/ BREF STM Revision: Background and news



For the planned revision of the BREF STM, a European delegation visited selected surface technology and finishing companies, including six companies in Germany (Image: VOA)

BREF STM Revision: Background and news

The planned revision of the BREF STM by the European Commission is being supported by companies and associations such as the VOA. A European delegation recently visited companies in the surface technology and finishing industry.

The European Commission defines the current state of the art for almost all industrial sectors in the form of BREF documents (Best Available Techniques Reference or Best Available Techniques Reference Document). The BREF Surface Treatment of Metals and Plastics (BREF STM) contains the key regulations for the surface treatment industry. The planned update started back in 2021 with the active involvement of the German Aluminum Surface Finishing Association (VOA) and is still ongoing today. No wonder, because the regulation involves an incredible amount of work, both by the national expert group - in Germany under the leadership of the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) - and the European Technical Working Group, which compiles all the necessary information and

emission values will be derived in future that are to be implemented on a binding basis throughout Europe; supplemented by visits to selected companies, which naturally also include VOA member companies.



Dr. Alexa A. Becker, Managing Director of the VOA (left) and Ralf Heitzelmann, Managing Director of Albea Oberflächenbearbeitung (Image: VOA)

Visit by the BREF STM European delegation

In 2024, the BREF STM delegation visited a total of six companies in Germany, which the UBA had previously selected in consultation with the EU Bureau for Research on Industrial Transformation and Emissions (EU-BRITE). The aim: to gather background information and discuss issues relevant to the review. Coordinated by the VOA office, several member companies had agreed to receive the delegation and to answer questions. The planned visit to ALBEA Oberflächenbearbeitung GmbH, a member company of the VOA, took place.

The delegation paid particular attention to the emission values in air and water as well as their monitoring and the external disposal of residues in the form of concentrated sludge. They were also interested in the specific consumption of natural gas and electricity, which the company mainly uses for processes and cooling/heating and monitors to some extent. The visit showed that although the expected energy consumption for a specific part of the process can be predicted based on many years of experience, estimates are only accurate when focused on specific vats due to the wide and

surface area in order to make a concrete calculation. This lack of precision makes it difficult to determine valid figures in practice and therefore also to comply with certain consumption limits. This is where reality and the more theoretical development of regulations that would actually have to be complied with come together.



Parliament in Brussels: The EU's European Green Deal brings the BREF process more into the focus of plant-related environmental protection at EU level
(Image: Fabian Holtappels - Pixabay)

New edition of the BREF STM taking realistic figures into account

It is therefore particularly important and an absolute concern of the VOA as a trade association for the industry to provide the delegation representatives with a deep insight into the practice of the companies through the company visit. This will provide valuable information on the technical conditions on site in order to formulate realistic, practicable requirements throughout Europe when updating the BREF STM. In the interests of the surface finishing industry, the VOA is looking forward to the new edition of the BREF STM, which provides the authorities with the basis for carrying out inspections in companies. The new edition is therefore of particular importance, as it will set standards in the future following approval. It is therefore particularly important that the new regulation standardizes realistic figures. VOA Managing Director Dr. Alexa A. Becker summarizes: "We would like to thank all VOA member companies who are participating and providing their input for the industry. This is the only way to formulate sensible regulations that

Interview and background information on the new edition of the BREF STM

Interview with Ralf Heitzelmann, Aalbea Surface Treatment & Technical Commission VOA

Background information on the revision of the BREF STM



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About the VOA

As a trade association, the Verband für die Oberflächenveredelung von Aluminium e. V. (VOA) forms the industry network of companies in the surface finishing of aluminum and other materials and promotes the economic, political and technical interests of its members at national and international level.

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