

Final disposal of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)-containing oil and equipment under the MedProgramme (2020-2024)

Child Project 1.1. Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hotspots and Measuring Progress to Impacts

Child Project 1.3. Financing Advanced Environmental Technologies in the Mediterranean Sea Region for Water Systems and Clean Coasts (ENVITECC)

What are polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)?

PCBs are organic compounds that were manufactured worldwide for use in a wide range of applications, most importantly as insulating fluids in transformers and in other types of closed and semi-closed applications, such as capacitors, as well as in so-called open applications, such as paints, sealants and carbon paper.

PCBs have excellent dielectric properties, are resistant to chemical and thermal degradation (they decompose at high temperatures above 1000 °C), are not affected by light and are not flammable.

PCBs are classified as persistent organic pollutants (POPs), which are chemicals that persist in the environment, bioaccumulate in living organisms, and pose a long-term risk to human health and the environment. PCBs can enter the environment through various sources, including improper disposal, leaks or spills from electrical equipment.

Exposure to PCBs can have serious health effects on humans, including developmental delays in children, immune system suppression, cancer, and reproductive disorders. PCBs can also have detrimental effects on wildlife and ecosystems.

The Stockholm Convention on POPs is a global treaty that aims to eliminate or restrict the production, use, and trade of POPs, including PCBs. PCBs are listed in Annex A to the Convention.

Under the Convention, countries are required to take measures to identify, manage, and dispose of PCBs safely, as well as develop strategies to eliminate or minimize their use. The Convention also encourages countries to work together to promote research, information exchange, and capacity building related to POPs.

MedProgramme and the final disposal of PCB-containing oil and equipment

MedProgramme provides a unique opportunity for participating countries to reach the Stockholm Convention targets, which is:

- ✓ To eliminate the use of PCBs in equipment by 2025, and
- ✓ Make determined efforts designed to lead to environmentally sound waste management of liquids containing PCB and equipment contaminated with PCB (having a PCB content above 0.005% or 50 mg/kg or 50 ppm), as soon as possible but no later than 2028.

MedProgramme aims to achieve Global Environmental Benefits through elimination of PCB-containing oil and/or PCB-containing equipment.

Child Project 1.1 and **Child Project 1.3** include activities related to the identification of PCBs containing oil/equipment, and support for labelling, packaging, transportation, shipment and sound disposal of PCB oil and/or PCB-containing equipment.

PCB activities under Child Project 1.1 and Child Project 1.3

The MedProgramme is supporting the following approaches and activities towards the final disposal of PCB-containing oil and equipment.

Child Project 1.1 UNEP/MAP

Support with:

- PCB inventories
- Visualization of PCB data
- PCB disposal plans
- PCB disposal tender

Technical Cooperation

Support: POPs audits at EBRD Client operations (including sampling and analysis at accredited laboratories)

Investment Grants for POPs:

- Investment grants for safe removal and disposal of POPs contaminated equipment (in-use and/or stockpiled) and eligible replacement technology
- Structured as “cash back” grants along with new EBRD financing for private and public sector Clients of the Bank

Child Project 1.3 EBRD

Synergies between the Child Projects:

- Sharing of information;
- Sharing of data;
- Coordination with countries.

Global Environmental Benefits
(GEBs) achieved through the final
disposal of PCBs-containing oil
and/or PCB-containing
equipment

Progress made and results

The MedProgramme is currently working on the following activities towards achieving the GEBs:

Child Project 1.1. UNEP/MAP PCB activities

- PCB disposal for a total of 771 tons of PCB-containing equipment on-going in Algeria and Lebanon;
- PCB inventory on-going in Algeria, Albania, Morocco and Tunisia;
- Verification of available PCB inventories on-going in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro
- Preparations on-going for additional tenders for final PCB-disposal

Child Project 1.3. EBRD PCB Projects

- Three projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tunisia, and Türkiye
- PCB contaminated equipment identified in private and public companies for safe removal and disposal



Related links

MedProgramme page:

<https://www.unep.org/unepmap/what-we-do/projects/MedProgramme>

ENVITECC page: <https://fintecc.ebrd.com/ENVITECC>

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