



NGOs' five key demands to improve REACH

The following five points are crucial aspects of the legislation if health and environment are to be properly protected. The points are explained in a little more detail below, and have been agreed by a coalition of health and environment NGOs (listed at the end of this page).

1. REACH should drive the phase-out of the most hazardous chemicals unless there is no alternative and the use is essential.
2. Sufficient safety information must be available for all chemicals registered under REACH.
3. Information supplied by industry must be checked for quality.
4. Chemicals in imported products should be subject to the same requirements.
5. The public should have a right to know what chemicals they are buying in products, and the system itself needs to be transparent.

- 1. An authorisation for the use of 'chemicals of very high concern' should only be granted if no safer alternatives are available and the use is essential to society. We believe the substitution principle must be mandatory in this process.**

Only when the loophole of 'adequate control' has been deleted will REACH give a clear signal on which chemicals need to be used less or removed from use. Otherwise, perfectly acceptable, safer alternatives will be sidelined and withheld from chemical users, and consumers will continue to be exposed to unacceptable risks.

- 2. Registration procedures must close the existing gap in safety information.**

In the proposed new regulation, 20,000 chemicals have been excluded from a proper safety assessment. The three (non-animal) tests plus the Chemical Safety Report removed from the registration requirements for 1-10 tonne per annum chemicals must be reinstated in order to provide sufficient information to evaluate the hazards, exposures and safe uses of chemicals. Without sufficient information, including biodegradability tests and exposure information, chemicals cannot be classified according to their danger or prioritised for further action.

- 3. Industry information needs independent quality control.**

REACH provides industry with a unique opportunity to take responsibility for chemicals safety. This will only work if sufficient quality auditing and regulatory quality control is supplied to guarantee the reliability of the information provided. All registration dossiers should be quality audited by an independent third or certified party, without a conflict of interest, and at least 5% of all registration dossiers must be evaluated by the national authorities.

4. Chemicals used in imported articles must have the same information requirements as those in EU-made articles.

The current proposal's weak requirements on substances in articles could allow EU companies to import articles from outside the EU containing chemicals not registered and/or maybe even banned or restricted under REACH. This loophole will not properly protect consumers from unsafe chemicals in imported products. It may also create a competitive disadvantage on certain sectors of EU manufacturing industry. Europe is the world's biggest market for consumer goods so it should provide leadership in setting new global safety standards.

5. There must be a public right to know and improved procedures on access to information throughout the supply chain.

Consumers and retailers should be able to find out about chemicals in the products they are paying for, particularly potentially harmful ones. Currently, the information flow stops once a chemical enters an article, denying users and consumers downstream the chance to choose between alternatives. Information should be handed down the entire manufacturing chain to enable retailers and consumers to know if chemicals of very high concern are present in finished articles. Articles should be labelled if authorised chemicals are present. The procedure for obtaining information from the chemical Agency is currently time-consuming and inefficient and we believe it is not compliant with the Aarhus Convention. Therefore, it needs to be streamlined and improved. The list of non-confidential information in REACH needs to be extended to include the names of registrants, volume categories and exposure information.

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