Courtesy translation

Statement 2018/19:MJU10 Communication from the Commission on a comprehensive EU framework on endocrine disruptors, COM(2018) 734

The position of the Committee

General comments on the Commission's Communication

The Committee welcomes the fact that the Commission has observed the request of the member states and initiated work with a comprehensive EU strategy to identify endocrine disruptors in relevant EU legislation, based on the WHO's generally accepted definition. Opportunities to identify potential substances need to be improved by drawing up criteria for the classification of endocrine disruptors. The Committee therefore welcomes the Commission's initiative with the purpose of establishing an internationally acknowledged classification of endocrine disruptors within the framework of the globally harmonised system of classification and labelling (GHS). The Committee has also, in previous contexts, emphasised the importance of the safe use of chemicals for human health and the environment. This especially applies to protection of children and adolescents, as they are particularly sensitive to chemicals. Further, the Committee has noted that it is important that the REACH Regulation is continuously extended when new substances of very high concern are identified and added to the candidate list (Report 2018/19:MJU7). The Riksdag has also announced to the Government that it should work towards ensuring that similar hazardous substances are dealt with in groups (Report 2016/17:MJU7). This applies, for example, to various bisphenols, as the substance bisphenol A risks being substituted with other bisphenols. The Committee further notes that the Commission has previously undertaken to draw up a Union strategy for a non-toxic environment by 2018. The Committee welcomes this commitment and expects that a schedule for the completion of this strategy will be presented under the 8th Environmental Action Programme.

In summary, the Committee considers that the Commission's strategy, with its broad approach, covers the most important issues on this subject. Below, the Committee gives an account of its opinions regarding four important aspects of the Communication. The Committee also proposes, in view of the above, that the Riksdag file the statement.

Knowledge of endocrine disruptors and their effects on human health and the environment
The Committee shares the Commission's assessment that further research on the prevalence and effects of endocrine disruptors is needed. The Committee wishes to stress that the current overview of relevant legislation should have a risk-based approach so that the areas and the legislation that are most relevant as regards exposure to endocrine disruptors are prioritised. In the opinion of the Committee, the planned overview also presents a suitable opportunity to examine in greater detail the need for more standardised tests for endocrine disruptors, including alternatives to animal testing. In this context, the Committee wishes to highlight the fact that Sweden has, inter alia, invested in a national centre of excellence[1] with the task of coordinating and promoting alternative methods to animal testing.

The Committee also shares the Commission's opinion that further research on the effects of endocrine disruptors on natural ecosystems and human health is needed. The Committee welcomes the Commission's proposal that there should be a special focus on vulnerable population groups that are particularly sensitive to endocrine disruptors such as children and adolescents as regards further measures and research. It is also positive that the Commission is launching a one-stop web portal for information on endocrine disruptors. In the opinion of the Committee, this initiative can lead to better coordination and accessibility of existing research findings. This portal should also be able to serve as an important channel for publishing new research findings and examples of measures in the member

[1] The Swedish 3R Centre

states. There may, for example, be a need to address past emissions or unintentionally formed substances. In these contexts too, the web portal can serve as a valuable tool for facilitating relevant exchange of information.

Precautionary principle
The Committee shares the Commission's assessment that the EU strategy on endocrine disruptors should be based on the precautionary principle and aim at minimising exposure to endocrine disruptors. The Committee views the candidate list in the REACH Regulation as a decisive instrument in operationalising the precautionary principle and promoting substitution of hazardous substances. Therefore, the Committee especially wishes to highlight the fact that the European Parliament and the Council have, under the 7th Environmental Action Programme, decided that efforts will be "stepped up to ensure that, by 2020, all relevant substances of very high concern, including substances with endocrine-disrupting properties, are placed on the REACH candidate list".[2]

The Committee considers that experience of the use of various perfluorinated substances (PFAS) clearly illustrates the need for preventive precautionary measures. There are several examples of how perfluorinated substances were previously believed to be safe for human health and the environment, which subsequently led to their widespread use. New findings have since shown that these substances can have endocrine disrupting properties. The widespread use and low biodegradation rate has led to a situation where perfluorinated substances will remain in our environment for a long time to come. According to the Committee's assessment, it is essential in the light of this to minimise the spread of potential endocrine disruptors for precautionary reasons. The Committee also welcomes the Commission's aim to prioritise research on substitutes for hazardous substances. At the same time, the Committee wishes to underline that the application of the precautionary principle must not lead to new risks being created in other areas through measures to address known or suspected endocrine disruptors.

Circular economy
The Committee further wishes to stress the importance of coordinating the EU's revised strategy on endocrine disruptors with other measures to achieve a circular economy. Many of the Union's legal acts, for example Directive 2000/53/EC on end-of-life vehicles[3] (ELV) and Directive 2011/65/EU on the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment[4] (RoHS) have the explicit purpose of facilitating recycling by restricting the use of hazardous substances in components and materials. Like these directives, a general overview of rules on endocrine disruptors could facilitate recycling of materials and a circular economy.

Supervision and market surveillance
The Committee further wishes to stress the need for increased investments in relevant supervision and market surveillance in the member states so that the spread of, inter alia, endocrine disruptors from imported products can be restricted. In this context, the Committee wishes to underline the importance of the coordination of national supervisory measures that takes place through the European Chemicals Agency's forum for exchange of information on enforcement and the European Commission's rapid alert system for products which pose a serious risk to consumers (RAPEX). Market surveillance agencies within the EU cooperate here to inform each other of products for which measures have been taken on account of failure to meet safety standards. Examples of measures may be that a company has withdrawn a product from the market or recalled it from consumers.

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[2] Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 (EUT L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 171).

[3] Directive 2000/53/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 September 2000 on end-of-life vehicles

[4] Directive 2011/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2011 on the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment