



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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*Ms. Kristina YNGWE
Chair of the Committee
on Environment and Agriculture of the Riksdag
SE-100 12 Stockholm*

*cc. Mr. Andreas NORLÉN
Speaker of the Riksdag
SE-100 12 Stockholm*

Dear Chair,

The Commission would like to thank the Riksdag for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions ‘Towards a comprehensive European Union framework on endocrine disruptors’ {COM(2018) 734 final}.

In adopting this Communication, the Commission has delivered on the commitment taken in 2017, when working on the criteria to identify endocrine disruptors in the areas of pesticides and biocides, and confirmed in its 2019 Work Programme¹. The Communication provides a comprehensive strategy to deal with these substances across policy areas in the future, building on the knowledge, experience and results of the past twenty years.

Despite all the progress achieved, endocrine disruption remains today a global challenge and a source of concern for many EU citizens. This is why it is important to step up the Union's efforts. The Commission remains committed to protect citizens and the environment from these dangerous chemicals and, at the same time, to preserve an internal market which delivers for consumers and where all EU business can thrive. In this context, the Communication announces a number of concrete actions aimed at minimising overall exposure to endocrine disruptors, accelerating the development of a thorough research basis and promoting an active dialogue between stakeholders.

The Commission welcomes the broad support of the Riksdag for the approach outlined in the Communication and agrees, in particular, on the importance of fostering research and applying the precautionary principle to protect citizens, particularly vulnerable consumers, such as children and adolescents. The Commission is also pleased that the

¹ COM(2018) 800 final.

Riksdag agrees on the importance to launch a one-stop shop web portal to make it easier and more transparent for citizens and stakeholders to access the relevant information on endocrine disruptors.

The Commission has carefully considered all the issues raised by the Riksdag in its Opinion and would like to offer the following observations.

The Riksdag stresses that the review of the EU legislation on endocrine disruptors announced by the Commission in the Communication should prioritise those areas that are most relevant in terms of exposure to these substances and look into the issue of testing, including alternatives to animal testing. The Commission agrees that the cross-cutting Fitness Check on endocrine disruptors should pay particular attention to legislation regulating products that constitute an important source of exposure for vulnerable consumers, such as toys, cosmetics and food contact materials. As noted by the Riksdag, a key issue to analyse in this exercise will be the identification of endocrine disruptors across legislation and, in this context, the different testing requirements will also play a role.

The Riksdag also refers to the seventh Environment Action Programme, where the European Parliament and Council called for stepping up efforts ‘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’. The Commission would like to note that it agreed to this commitment in the ‘Roadmap on Substances of Very High Concern for 2020’ and, as noted by the European Chemicals Agency in its latest progress analysis published in April 2018, work is progressing well. All known and relevant substances with endocrine disrupting properties at the time of assessment were included in the on-going work: 99 substances, which were screened as potential endocrine disruptors, were already regulated (due to endocrine disruption or other reasons) and some 40 further substances were under scrutiny, while 16 were deprioritised after assessing them.

As regards the recommendation by the Riksdag to ensure coordination between the work on endocrine disruptors and other measures to achieve a circular economy, the Commission would like to refer in particular to the Communication adopted last year on the ‘implementation of the circular economy package: options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation’². The Communication supports the objectives of the Circular Economy Action Plan of substituting substances of concern and, where this is not possible, reducing their presence and improving their tracking. It explores several critical issues in the way the legislation on chemicals, products and waste work together and presents options to address key questions in order to overcome these issues.

² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the circular economy package: options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation; COM(2018) 32 final.

The Commission shares the Riksdag's view on the importance of cooperation between national authorities to ensure adequate market surveillance and enforcement in the area of endocrine disruptors. In the last ten years, the Rapid Alert System for dangerous non-food products alerted and allowed the removal from the EU market of 1835 products containing parabens or phthalates, known to have a negative effect on the reproductive system of children. Similarly, the Forum of the European Chemicals Agency for Exchange of Information on Enforcement has played a central role in the coordination of the work of enforcement authorities in the area of chemicals. The Commission is actively involved in the work of the Forum, e.g. by supporting the development of projects to harmonise enforcement in Member States and check the current level of compliance with obligations imposed on industry by Union legislation. Over the past years, these EU-wide projects have supported national authorities in their efforts to withdraw non-compliant products from the market, such as products containing phthalates. The agreement reached by the European Parliament and Council earlier this year on the Commission's proposal for a Regulation on market surveillance and compliance of products³ will further improve compliance checks and cooperation between national competent authorities, including for EU legislation on chemicals, and will therefore also be important for the compliance of products with regard to requirements related to endocrine disruptors.

The Commission takes this opportunity to inform the Riksdag that its services have already started working on the different actions announced in the Communication. The Fitness Check to review the existing legislative framework on endocrine disruptors should be finalised in the first half of 2020. In 2019, the Commission aims at organising the first meeting of the Annual Forum on endocrine disruptors and at launching the web portal on these substances. Other actions, for example in the area of research or international cooperation, necessarily have a longer timeframe.

The Commission is also engaging in a constructive dialogue with all the EU institutions, for example in the Environment Council, where an exchange of views on the Communication took place on 5 March 2019, and in the European Parliament, which organised a debate and adopted a Resolution on the topic on 16 April 2019. In this context, the Opinion of the Riksdag is very timely and will provide useful input to our work.

³ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules and procedures for compliance with and enforcement of Union harmonisation legislation on products and amending Regulations (EU) No 305/2011, (EU) No 528/2012, (EU) 2016/424, (EU) 2016/425, (EU) 2016/426 and (EU) 2017/1369 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and Directives 2004/42/EC, 2009/48/EC, 2010/35/EU, 2013/29/EU, 2013/53/EU, 2014/28/EU, 2014/29/EU, 2014/30/EU, 2014/31/EU, 2014/32/EU, 2014/33/EU, 2014/34/EU, 2014/35/EU, 2014/53/EU, 2014/68/EU and 2014/90/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council; COM(2017) 795 final.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Riksdag and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Jyrki Katainen
Vice-President of the Commission*