

HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE

EU chemicals policy 2030: building on the past, moving to the future

Brussels, the Square – 27/28 June 2019

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1. Concept and objectives

High-level conference where the Commission would provide the outcomes of its recent evaluations and initiatives in the EU chemicals policies and all the relevant stakeholders could discuss opportunities and potential developments for the EU chemicals policy.

Specific objectives:

- To **present and discuss the recent developments in the EU chemicals policy and to provide a comprehensive assessment** of the overall situation and the current challenges (based on the findings of the Fitness Check, the REACH Review and the Chemicals-Products-Waste Interface, including the results of the public consultation).
- To **discuss future steps and potential developments of the EU chemicals policy** in order to improve the protection of human health and the environment – in line with the SDGs' targets – as well as to support the good functioning of the internal market while enhancing the competitiveness and innovation of EU industry.

2. Background and policy context

2.1. The EU context

- **More than 40 pieces of legislation form the EU chemicals legislation.** It regulates both the chemical sector as well as related downstream industries that use chemicals, thus covering the full lifecycle of products manufactured and those imported in Europe.
- **It has evolved and expanded significantly** since the adoption of the first chemicals-related directive in the late 1960s, illustrating the continuous commitment to achieve a high level of protection of human health and the environment, as well as to ensure the free movement of chemicals in the internal market.
- As part of its Better Regulation Agenda, the **current Commission has been working on two major initiatives in the EU chemicals policy:** the REACH

Review (adopted in March 2018) and the Fitness Check of the most relevant EU chemicals legislation, excluding REACH (adoption expected in spring 2019). Several other evaluations have been carried out or are currently on-going and are nearly completed.¹

- Within the **context of the Circular Economy Action Plan** (2015), a key initiative of the current Commission to move towards a more circular economy models, the Commission adopted the Chemicals-Products-Waste Interface and the European Plastics Strategy (January 2018).
- The Commission also adopted a **Communication on endocrine disruptors** (2018), setting out amongst other actions a fitness check to assess whether relevant legislation protects human health and the environment by minimising exposure to these substances.
- Other EU/Commission initiatives in recent years have aimed at **strengthening the knowledge base on chemical hazards and on chemical exposures**, e.g. through the 'Information Platform for Chemical Monitoring' (IPCHEM), the 'Human biomonitoring for European Union' initiative funded under Horizon 2020 and the 'Endocrine Active Substances Information System' (EASIS).
- Every year, **significant investments** also go into EU-level capacity for supporting risk assessment processes (via ECHA and EFSA) and research, development and innovation in the chemicals area (via EU R&I Programmes), including improving non-animal testing methods.
- The 7th EAP included amongst its planned actions for chemicals **the development by 2018 of a Union strategy for a non-toxic environment**. A comprehensive study was conducted, including seven sub-studies, and was published in August 2017. The 2018 deadline for the strategy however could not be met, as the Commission has been focussing on the three major initiatives mentioned above.

2.2. The global context

a) *The UN Sustainable Development Goals*

- In 2002, the EU and its Member States, participants to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, committed to achieve the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle, often referred to as the 'WSSD 2020 Goal'². This was followed, in 2006, by a commitment to the **Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management** (SAICM)³, a global policy framework to promote safe chemicals management with the explicit aim of implementing the WSSD 2020 Goal. New targets for the SAICM process are currently being elaborated in line with the SDGs.
- In 2015, the Un General Assembly adopted the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, along with a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets. The EU has committed to implement the SDGs

¹ REFIT evaluation of the EU legislation on plant protection products and pesticides residues; Fitness Check of Reporting and Monitoring of EU Environment Policy; Evaluation of Regulation (EC) No 648/2004 (Detergents Regulation); REFIT evaluation of the General Food Law; REFIT evaluation of the European Union occupational safety and health Directives

² <http://web.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/2020-goal>

³ <http://www.saicm.org/>

both in its internal and external policies. In November 2016, the Commission reiterated its commitment to achieve sustainable development and presented its next steps for European sustainability⁴. On 30 January 2019, the Commission published a Reflection Paper⁵ aimed as an input to the EU's Strategic Agenda 2019-2024.

- The **SDG targets directly relevant for the EU chemicals policy** include the protection of human health and the environment, moving towards sustainable production and consumption, promoting sustainable technologies and ensuring the sustainable management of resources.
- **Within the EU chemicals policy**, only the CLP Regulation and REACH mentions sustainable development as a policy driver. Other major pieces of the EU chemicals legislation (e.g. the Plant Protection Products and the Biocidal Products Regulations) refer only to sustainable use, but the overall sustainability is made operational through the general objectives of the EU chemicals legislation (i.e. protection of human health and the environment, ensuring a well-functioning internal market, enhancing competitiveness and innovation and promoting non-animal testing).

b) *EU chemicals industry: overview and future challenges*

- The chemical manufacturing industry is the 5th largest in the EU. As an "enabling industry", it is at the heart of the EU manufacturing industry, SMEs accounting for around 96% of the number of companies in the sector (1/3 of the direct employment and 1/3 of the sector's value-added). A large range of downstream sectors e.g. automotive and aerospace, textiles, cosmetics, toys, rely on the use of chemicals in their everyday activities. Other important links exist with agriculture activities and services.
- Europe is the global leader in many industries, especially in high value added, low carbon and sophisticated products and services. The EU chemicals industry's main assets are a high level of technological development, skilled and talented workforce and world-class science base. The Single Market is another one.
- The EU remains the largest chemicals exporting region in the world. Globalisation, a strong chemical demand growth in other parts of the world (in China in particular), sustainability and rapid technological change are the main challenges for the EU chemicals industry.
- The Communication '*Investing in a smart, innovative and sustainable Industry A renewed EU Industrial Policy Strategy*'⁶ stressed that important efforts are needed by all interested parties at all levels and most importantly industry itself to maintain and reinforce Europe's industrial leadership in the age of globalisation, sustainability challenges and rapid technological change.
- As highlighted in the recently published Reflection Paper '*Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030*'⁷, to be a first mover globally towards a smart, innovative, and sustainable industry and smart, sustainable and inclusive

⁴ COM(2016) 739 final

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/files/reflection-paper-towards-sustainable-europe_en

⁶ COM/2017/0479 final

growth can confer great competitive advantages to the EU and its businesses to tackle the increasing global competition. Without providing support and without building on the current EU leadership in chemicals and on many other sustainability aspects (circular economy and tackling climate change), we might lose the opportunity to benefit from the first mover advantage globally. In a medium to long term, this would negatively affect jobs and growth in Europe.

- The Global Chemicals Outlook II finds that the global goal to minimize adverse impacts of chemicals and waste will not be achieved by 2020. The size of the global chemicals industry is projected to double by 2030 and consumption and production are rapidly increasing. Solutions exist, but more ambitious worldwide action by all stakeholders is urgently required.

2.3. EU Member States, EU Parliament and stakeholders

- In its reply to a letter from 10 EU Member States, who expressed their concerns about the potential delays of several initiatives (notably the Non-Toxic Environment Strategy), the Commission stated that **it will first finalise the Fitness Check of the most relevant EU chemicals legislation, excluding REACH. It will then take stock** of results of the Fitness Check, the 2nd REACH Review and the Chemicals-Products-Waste Interface Communication, which together provide a comprehensive assessment of the situation in chemicals area. This assessment will prepare the grounds for the next steps.
- **A number of Member States have also been actively calling for ‘strengthening and extending the EU chemicals policy** to achieve a sustainable circular economy’ (see letter sent by 8 MS on 28 November). **Denmark has adopted a Chemicals Action Plan 2018-2021.** The last Presidency – **Austria** –**has organised three conferences and a ministerial lunch** on the EU chemicals policy.
- In its resolution on the implementation of the 7th Environment Action Programme⁸, the **European Parliament called on the Commission to identify long term actions** for the EU chemicals policy.
- A number of stakeholders (from both civil society as well as industry) has developed various **position papers on the future of the EU chemicals policy**.

Chemicals industries have been actively promoting ‘**sustainability strategies**’ (e.g. Cefic, Euromateux etc.) and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development has recently published a ‘**Chemicals sector SDG Roadmap**’⁹.

3. The conference

3.1. Deliverables from the Conference

- **A summary presenting the key messages reached at the conference and presented by the organisers in the concluding session:** such a document will be based on the views of participants expressed during the conference, including the poll results from the thematic sessions regarding the key issues,

⁸ P8_TA(2018)0100

⁹ <https://www.wbcsd.org/Programs/People/Sustainable-Development-Goals/Resources/Chemical-Sector-SDG-Roadmap>

priorities and challenges for future and possible ways of addressing these as well as other opportunities to unlock the full potential of the EU chemicals policy.

- **Full report:** detailed report of the discussion and findings of the conference. It will represent a more detailed overview of the presentations and discussions in the plenaries and in the thematic sessions.

3.2. Topics of the thematic sessions

Thematic Session 1: Promoting green and sustainable chemistry through innovation, alternative technologies and processes and right skills

- *Discussion topics: safety-by-design, life cycle approaches, first mover advantages in terms of competitiveness and creating jobs and growth, how to support companies in transition towards the development of smart, innovative and sustainable chemicals, skills for sustainable chemistry*

Thematic Session 2: Chemicals and the circular economy: safe management of chemicals in products and waste and contribution to resource efficiency

- *Discussion topics: interface chemicals-products-waste, traceability of hazardous chemicals in waste, resource efficiency, chemical recycling, life-cycle approaches*

Thematic Session 3: Improving the regulatory framework for risk assessment and risk management of hazardous chemicals

- *Discussion topics: streamlining the EU risk assessment, grouping approaches, improving protection of vulnerable groups, better integration of science into policy and alternative testing methods*

Thematic Session 4: Knowledge building, monitoring and early warning on emerging risks

- *Discussion topics: research needs, monitoring exposures in humans and environment (incl. human biomonitoring), identification and management of emerging risks, data sharing, how to identify research and knowledge gaps*

Thematic Session 5: Smarter communication, better protection and lower costs: meetings citizens' concerns, completing the EU Single Market and ensuring a level playing field

- *Discussion topics: better communication of hazards to consumers, safe consumers' products, e-trade, using real time and big data for enforcement and surveillance, tools for supporting SMEs in compliance, exploit digitisation to boost competitiveness and innovativeness of EU industry*

Thematic Session 6: The EU chemicals policy and global challenges: sustainability, innovation, competitiveness

- *Discussion topics: SDGs, post-2020 global approach to the safe management of chemicals, making the EU chemicals legislation fit for future challenges, supporting competitiveness of the EU chemicals industry, create level playing field for EU companies, the Single Market as basis for EU industries' competitive advantage*

Draft Programme

1 st day	
8:30 – 9:30	Registration and welcome coffee
9:30 – 10:00	<p>Session 1: Opening</p> <p>Chair: Joanna Drake, Deputy Director General, DG Environment, European Commission</p> <p>Keynote speeches:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Elżbieta Bieńkowska, European Commissioner for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (video message)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Minister for the Environment, Denmark [name tbc]</p>
10:00 – 12:30	<p>Session 2: Moderated panel discussion – Building on 20 years of EU chemicals policy</p> <p>Chair: Joanna Drake, Deputy Director General, DG Environment, European Commission</p> <p>Moderator: Aminda Leigh</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">State Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Romania [name tbc]</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Luca Jahier, President of the EESC [tbc]</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Christina Ruden, Stockholm University</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Patrick ten Brink, Director of EU Policy, EEB</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Martin Kayser, Vice President, BASF</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Monique Goyens, Director General, BEUC</p>
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:30	<p>Session 3: Thematic parallel sessions</p> <p>Thematic Session 1: Promoting green and sustainable chemistry through innovation, alternative technologies and processes and right skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting the scene: Professor Joel Tickner, Lowell Centre for Sustainable Production ○ Written contributions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jack de Bruijn, Director Prioritisation and integration, ECHA ○ Lynette Chung, Clariant ○ Yann Le Tallec, Director, Government & Public Affairs, LEGO ○ James Clark, University of York [tbc] ○ World cafe discussion and prioritisation by participants <p>Thematic Session 2: Chemicals and the circular economy: safe management of chemicals in products and waste and contribution to resource efficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting the scene: Dirk Jepsen, Okopol ○ Contributions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mats Linder, Ellen MacArthur Foundation [tbc]

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alice Bernard, Client Earth [tbc] ○ Violaine Verougstraete, Chemicals Management Director, Eurometaux ○ Olivier Francois, EURIC ○ Aurore Mourette, FEAD network ○ World cafe discussion and prioritisation by participants <p>Thematic Session 3: Improving the regulatory framework for risk assessment and risk management of hazardous chemicals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting the scene : Kestutis Sadauskas, DG ENV, European Commission ○ Contributions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guilhem De Seze, EFSA ○ Tatiana Santos, EEB ○ Sylvie Lemoine, CEFIC ○ Member States authorities ○ World cafe discussion and prioritisation by participants
15:30 16:00	– Coffee break
16:00 18:00	<p><u>Session 4: Thematic parallel sessions</u></p> <p><i>Format: see Session 3</i></p> <p>Thematic Session 4: Knowledge building, monitoring and early warning on emerging risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting the scene : Xenia Trier, Senior Policy Officer, European Environment Agency ○ Contributions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thomas Jakl, Austrian Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism, HBM4EU Ambassador ○ Åke Bergman, Professor Emeritus, Stockholm University ○ Michael Warhurst, ChemTrust ○ Member States authorities ○ World cafe discussion and prioritisation by participants <p>Thematic Session 5: Smarter communication, better protection and lower costs: meeting citizens' concerns, completing the EU Single Market and ensuring a level playing field</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting the scene : Kirsi Ekroth-Manssila, Head of Unit, DG GROW, European Commission ○ Contributions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Signe Frese, COOP Denmark ○ Susanne Zänker, AISE ○ Stine Müller, Project Manager, THINK Chemicals, Danish Consumer Council/ANEC ○ Lenka Dolezalova, EU RAPEX network and of the EU Consumer safety network [tbc] ○ World cafe discussion and prioritisation by participants <p>Thematic Session 6:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting the scene : Henrik Soren Larsen, Head of Department, Ministry for Food and Environment, Denmark ○ Contributions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Willem Vriesendorp, FIPRA ○ Eugenio Longo, Borealis ○ Alexandra Caterbow, Hej Support ○ Member States ○ World cafe discussion and prioritisation by participants
18:00 20:00	–	Standing dinner
2 nd day		
9:00 10:15	–	<u>Session 5: Moderated discussion on the outcomes of the 6 thematic sessions</u> Chair: Aminda Leigh Panel: rapporteurs/chairs of thematic sessions
10:15- 11:15		<u>Session 6: Panel discussion: Moving the EU Chemicals Policy to 2030 (1)</u> Chair: Aminda Leigh Panel discussion (1): Rolph Payet , Executive Secretary, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions Secretariat [TBC] Bjorn Hansen , Executive Director ECHA Bernhard Url , Executive Director EFSA Marco Mensik , Director General CEFIC Theresa Kjell , Senior business and policy advisor, Chemsec
11:15 11:45	–	Coffee break
11:45– 13:00		<u>Session 7: Panel discussion: Moving the EU Chemicals Policy to 2030 (2)</u> Chair: Aminda Leigh John Warner , Founder of green chemistry Hans Bruyninckx , Executive Director, European Environment Agency Genon Jensen , Executive Director, HEAL Véronique Willems , Secretary General, SMEs United Leena Ylä-Mononen , Director General for Environmental Protection, Finland
13.00 13.30	-	<u>Session 8: Conclusions</u> Joanna Drake , Deputy Director General, DG Environment, European Commission Carlo Pettinelli , Director, DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, European Commission
13:30 14:30	–	Lunch