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European Parliament calls for paradigm shift for sustainable chemicals and toxic-free environment

Chemical Strategy

Today, Members of the European Parliament will debate the "Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability", ahead of the planned launch of the Commission strategy, as part of the Green Deal, this September. MEPs will vote today and Friday on calls for a comprehensive tightening of the rules based on which chemicals can be placed on the market as well as concrete bans.

The Greens/EFA group are calling for endocrine disrupters, used in cosmetics, toys and food packaging to be banned, as well as long-life fluorochemicals in all non-essential applications. The combination or 'cocktail' effects of chemicals should be addressed, rather than looking at the toxicity of individual chemicals. The European chemicals law REACH must be strengthened to better protect human health and the environment, through acting against groups of substances, by including polymers in the system and the tightening of data requirements.

The European Parliament's resolution shows the way forward for the European chemical industry. The chemical sector should not fare like other key European industries. Advanced products must continue to be produced in Europe. The ambitious chemical policy demanded by the European Parliament is therefore an opportunity for industry to invest in future-proof and crisis-proof technologies.

Sven Giegold MEP, shadow rapporteur for the Greens/EFA group in the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, comments:

"The European Parliament will send a demand that we need a paradigm shift in chemicals legislation to achieve a healthier world for people and a toxic-free environment. This will require the chemical industry to play its role in the ecological transition. The European Commission should adopt a zero tolerance strategy on toxic chemicals. The European Chemicals Strategy must be guided by the precautionary principle and the protection of people and the environment.

"The zero-pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment provides the impetus for the ecological transition of the European chemical industry. Sustainable chemicals policy not only protects our health. It is also an opportunity for European industry to invest in sustainable products. Clean chemistry 'made in Europe' makes European industry future-proof. Only a sustainable industry can remain competitive and secure the 1.2

million jobs in the European chemical industry."

Background:

You can follow the debate on "Chemicals strategy for sustainability" live here from 14.30:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/home.html>

Toxic chemicals are found in toys, cosmetics, food packaging, coatings on drinking cups, pans and clothing to repel grease, water and dirt. They accumulate in humans and the environment and can have a negative impact on development, increase the risk of infection and cholesterol levels, and result in reduced birth weight of children. The Parliament resolution is calling on the Strategy to tackle entire groups of substances rather than be limited to individual substances such as bisphenol-A. The same applies to the more than 4,000 different extremely long-life per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances ("PFAS"). For new products and those made of recycled materials the same chemical standards are to apply, so that we do not perpetuate the use of legacy chemicals via recycling.

Following blood samples taken during the German Environmental Health Study, the German Federal Environment Agency recently warned of an increasing number of chemicals in children's blood and is calling for an extensive EU-wide ban on the extremely long-lived per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances ("PFAS"). Study available in English here:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/getaccess/pii/S1438463920300584/drawdown>

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