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One-third of chemicals on the market breach EU safety rules

Chemicals

For years, chemical companies in the European Union have marketed hundreds of harmful chemicals that without properly checking if they are toxic, eco-toxic or have the potential to cause cancer, impair fertility and inhibit the development of unborn children.

The European Environmental Bureau today re-published a 3-year study by the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) and the Federal Environment Office that shows that one third of the 1,814 chemicals manufactured or imported into the EU since 2010 are in breach of the European Chemicals Regulation REACH and illegal under EU law.

Only 31 percent of the chemicals are legal, another third have to be further investigated. High volume chemicals account for 95% of all chemicals sold. The types of chemicals implicated in the study can be found in paints, packaging, furniture and building materials.

Bart Staes, Greens/EFA member in the Special Committee on Pesticides in the European Parliament comments:

"Cancers, respiratory diseases and infertility have all been linked to chemical exposure. For nearly a decade the chemical industry has been obliged to test all high volume chemicals for dangerous effects in order to sell them, so the very idea that a third of these chemicals are still on the EU market without having been properly scrutinised for very harmful properties is sickening. Authorities must enforce the law and not give a free pass to the chemicals industry."

"We applaud the German authorities for taking the issue seriously and making this in-depth assessment. This should be a serve as a stark reminder to all Member States that laws are only as good as their enforcement. A large part of the industry has dodged the rules for many years by trying to avoid legally required tests on their products. This must end, non-compliance can no longer be rewarded with inaction. The European Chemical Agency (ECHA) needs to explain how we got to this point beyond using weak excuses about data quality."

Bas Eickhout, Greens/EFA member of Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety in the European Parliament comments:

"This could be the chemical industry's Dieselgate. It is unacceptable that dozens of companies have gotten away with selling hundreds of chemicals which do not comply with EU rules for years. If it's true that chemical companies have knowingly been selling illegal chemicals that could cause immense damage to human health and the environment, then they must be held account for their actions. Once again we've seen a powerful industry undermine human health for the sake of profit, while regulators have been asleep at the wheel and put all of us at risk in the process.

"The European Chemicals Agency and EU Member States must now show that they are serious about protecting human health and the environment. All substances that do not comply with existing EU rules on chemicals must be taken off the market and governments must apply heavy penalties for any instances of non-compliance that regulators have already uncovered."

[REACH Compliance Project "Availability of Health and Environmental Data for High Tonnage Chemicals under REACH" – Data Quality of Environmental Endpoints in Registrations](#)

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