

European
Commission

CHEMICALS

What's in it for you?

Chemicals are part of life ...
in the things we use, what we eat,
and who we are

Some chemicals are harmless
... some are harmful to health
and the environment

Pregnant women and
children are most vulnerable
to chemical exposure

EU chemicals legislation aims to
ensure a high level of protection for
the public and the environment

Chemicals are everywhere!

Environment

Did you know ...



The EU chemical industry is worth
€ 500 billion a year.



Around two-thirds of the chemicals
produced **are toxic** in some
form to humans or the environment.



The EU's **REACH** Regulation
is very stringent on chemicals of
most concern (such as carcinogens
or endocrine disruptors).



REACH delivers
**long-term health and
environmental benefits**,
estimated at € 100 billion.

Plastics in a sustainable world

It is difficult to imagine our lives without chemicals. Our homes and offices are full of plastics, such as toys, kitchenware, storage boxes and packaging.

However, disposing of these products has environmental consequences, especially if not done correctly. Plastic micro-particles can even be mistaken by animals for food. To ensure that we – and the planet – truly benefit from our chemical ingenuity, we must act responsibly.



REACH – REGISTRATION, EVALUATION, AUTHORISATION AND RESTRICTION OF CHEMICALS

The EU's 2006 REACH regulation improves protection of health and the environment from risks posed by chemicals. It established the European Chemicals Agency.

<https://echa.europa.eu/regulations/reach/understanding-reach>

HOW TO HANDLE CHEMICALS



1. CHEMICALS IN DAILY LIFE

Clothes manufacturers use thousands of chemicals; furniture is sometimes treated with flame retardants or stain repellents; and many childcare items are made of plastic.

The floors and air in our homes and offices even contain traces of chemical pollutants. All of us, but particularly children and pets, are exposed to a complex cocktail of chemicals.

How can EU citizens get informed about the chemicals they bring into the home?

INFORMED CONSUMERS

Consumers have the right to ask their suppliers whether the products for sale contain toxic chemicals. If so, the supplier must specify which ones. By law, replies must be given within 45 days.

Household detergents and do-it-yourself products (paint stripper, glue, foam, silicone ...) are labelled with warning symbols, packaged safely and contain instructions for safe use and storage.

2. BUSINESS OBLIGATIONS

How does the EU track the chemicals that are on the market?

FULL TRANSPARENCY

REACH means companies must register the chemicals they manufacture or import with the European Chemicals Agency; some 15 000 substances have been registered to date.

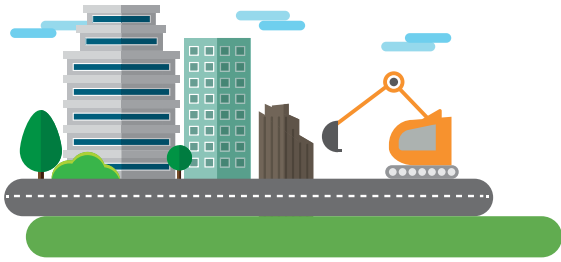


3. SAFETY CONCERNS

As we learn more, how can we be sure that chemicals currently on the market are safe?

ONGOING ASSESSMENTS

The EU continuously assesses health and environmental risks, and this information is made available via the European Chemicals Agency.



ASBESTOS BAN

Asbestos, which causes a deadly lung disease, was banned EU-wide in 1991, but it can still be found in old buildings.



TACKLING POPs

The EU, along with some 90 other countries, signed a convention to reduce or eliminate the production, use or release of POPs (persistent organic pollutants) – chemicals that persist in the environment and accumulate in the bodies of living things through the food cycle.

And some toxic chemicals may never disappear from the environment!

THE PRICE WE PAY

Plastic pollution damages our health and the environment – and there is a cost to society. Up to € 630 million a year is spent cleaning up coasts and beaches every year.



SOME TIPS FOR GREENER AND/OR SAFER CHEMICALS

There are a few things everyone can do for a safer and more sustainable use of chemicals:

- Check warning symbols and follow safety instructions
- Make sure your household and DIY products are disposed of correctly
- Seek out products with an ecolabel
- Inform yourself about the safety of certain chemicals in products, especially if you are pregnant or have children
- Wash new clothes before use
- Ensure a healthy indoor climate: air out and clean rooms
- In case of an incident with a chemical, call emergency number 112 and ask for the poison centre

More information:

<https://echa.europa.eu/chemicals-in-our-life>

Chemicals are present in every aspect of our lives. Through a comprehensive approach – spearheaded by REACH – the EU aims to ensure the highest possible level of protection for human health and the environment.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)

<https://echa.europa.eu/>

About chemicals and the environment

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/index_en.htm

About chemicals legislation for companies

https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/chemicals_is



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