



MEDIA ADVISORY: For Immediate release 25 May 2007

Too early to celebrate REACH

One week before the European Union's new chemicals legislation – REACH - enters into force (1 June 2007) [1], European environmental, women's, health and consumer groups have warned in an open letter to the European Commission that REACH cannot be celebrated until it is strengthened to provide proper health and environmental protection.

The official start date of REACH symbolically marks the beginning of a new approach to chemicals regulation in Europe. Over the coming years, persistent and bioaccumulative chemicals will be substituted if safer alternatives exist, and companies will have to provide health and safety information for large volume chemicals that they produce or import into Europe.

But thousands of chemicals will escape any requirement to provide sufficient health and safety information. And many chemicals that can cause cancer, birth defects and reproductive illnesses will still be allowed in manufacturing and consumer goods.

Embedded in the REACH legislation are numerous reviews, beginning in 2007 and continuing for the next 12 years. These reviews will give the European Commission and EU member states the opportunity to tighten the legislation in line with last year's demands by civil society and some of the main political parties. However, the reviews could also be used by the chemical industry to further weaken current safety requirements.

In their letter [2], the environmental, women's, health and consumer groups ask the European Commission to ensure that the newly established European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) operates fully independently of the chemical industry and to make sure that REACH is fully and correctly implemented.

“My Voice” – the citizen's guide on how to demand better protection of human health and environment from toxic chemicals” can be found here: ([link here](#))

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Notes

[1] Entry into force: Titles I, IV, IX, X, XIII, XIV & XV, together with Articles 32, 67 and 115 apply from this date. Directive 91/155/EEC is repealed and article 14 of Directive 1999/45/EEC is deleted

Between now and June 2008, further technical requirements will be produced and the details of the European Chemicals Agency will be finalised. In June 2008, the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) will be fully operational. The chemical industry will then begin to provide safety information for up to 30,000 chemicals on the market. In 2009, ECHA is expected to publish a “candidate list” for the most hazardous chemicals that will be subject to the authorisation procedure.

[2] [Link to letter](#)