



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on combination effects of chemicals

*2988th ENVIRONMENT Council meeting
Brussels, 22 December 2009*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

RECALLING the commitment made at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the Strategic Approach to International Chemical Management (SAICM) adopted on 6 February 2006 in Dubai, to ensure that, by 2020, chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimise significant adverse effects on human health and the environment;

UNDERLINING the fact that Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals (REACH) will make a major contribution to meeting this commitment;

P R E S S

UNDERLINING ALSO the fact that combination effects from exposure to multiple chemicals from single sources or products are recognised in some parts of Community legislation, such as the EU Regulation on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures¹ and the new EU Regulation on plant protection products², the Cosmetics Directive³ and the EU Directive on chemical agents at work⁴, and that agreed methods for assessment need to be further developed;

ACKNOWLEDGING that human beings, animals and plants are exposed to many different chemicals from different sources and pathways, and that recent studies indicate that combination effects of these chemicals, including reproductive toxicity and other adverse effects from endocrine disrupters, can have serious negative implications for human health and the environment;

1. RECALLS the European Environment and Health Strategy, and the EU Action Plan on Environment and Health (2004-2010), which *inter alia* recognise a need to take into account combined exposure of chemicals in risk assessments;
2. TAKES NOTE OF a study from the Danish Environmental Protection Agency concluding that there are situations in which exposure to multiple chemicals is of concern, illustrated by children's simultaneous exposure to several endocrine disrupting substances in everyday life, and of other relevant work relating to exposure to multiple chemicals undertaken by the European Food Safety Authority and some EU Member States, as well as by the World Health Organization, the US Environmental Protection Agency and the US National Research Council;
3. STRESSES that further action in the field of chemicals policy, research and assessment methods to address combination effects of chemicals is required, in particular taking into account the fact that existing EU legislation in most cases builds on a chemical-by-chemical assessment approach;
4. ENCOURAGES the Commission and Member States to step up research efforts in this area, including a review of the existing research database, and to urge that the issue of combination effects from exposure to multiple chemicals, including endocrine disrupters, be adequately addressed by the OECD;

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures, amending and repealing Directives 67/548/EEC and 1999/45/EC, and amending Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006.

² Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market and repealing Council Directives 79/117/EEC and 91/414/EEC.

³ Council Directive 76/768/EEC of 27 July 1976 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to cosmetic products.

⁴ Council Directive 98/24/EC of 7 April 1998 on the protection of the health and safety of workers from the risks related to chemical agents at work.

5. WELCOMES the initiative of the Commission to undertake a study to be finalised by early 2010 to examine the scientific basis for assessing the risks due to combination effects of exposure to multiple chemicals;
 6. LOOKS FORWARD TO the Commission report on the implementation of the Community Strategy for endocrine disrupters and to the review of the EU Action Plan on Environment and Health, by 2010;
 7. INVITES the Commission, drawing on existing and future research and paying appropriate attention to the costs and benefits:
 - to make recommendations as to how exposure to multiple endocrine disruptors should be further addressed within relevant existing Community legislation, *inter alia* in the context of its forthcoming report on the implementation of the Community strategy on endocrine disrupters to be completed by 2010,
 - to assess how and whether relevant existing Community legislation adequately addresses risks from exposure to multiple chemicals from different sources and pathways, and on this basis to consider appropriate modifications, guidelines and assessment methods, and report back to the Council by early 2012 at the latest,
 - to pay appropriate attention to the precautionary principle and the potential risks of chemical combination effects when drawing up future proposals, *inter alia* by assessing the need for risk management measures to protect the environment and human health."
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