



The European Consumers' Organisation

COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE
PRESS RELEASE

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Dangerous chemicals in consumer products: your Right to Know not easy to use

Would you like to know if your carpet or your child's toothbrush contains any hazardous chemicals? You have the right to ask the trader and manufacturer. But when BEUC, the European Consumer Organisation, and its members tested it, we received very few satisfying answers.

The EU's REACH legislationⁱ provides for a "Right to Know". It enables consumers to ask any economic operator of the supply chain (retailer, manufacturer) if one of their products or its packaging contain Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC) in a concentration higher than 0.1% weight by weight. The relevant information must be provided, free of charge, within 45 days.

BEUC and national consumer organisations tested this information tool to check if companies were aware of their obligations and were able to answer in a precise and consumer-friendly way within the timeline. We sent consumer letters from 9 EU countries (Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK) for 34 categories of products asking retailers if a specific consumer product contained any of the SVHC from the REACH regulation. The results were extremely disappointing. Of the 25 letters we sent in each country, we received 10 satisfying answers in Sweden and Austria, 9 in Germany, 8 in France, 7 in UK, and only 3 in Poland and Denmark, one in Greece and none in Spain.

Monique Goyens, BEUC Director General, commented:

"Hazardous chemicals are present in our homes, but also our blood or breast milk while consumers have little information on where they are and how to avoid them, despite them being of great potential risk.

Along with greater transparency, the intention of the REACH 'Right to Know' was to create pressure on industry to develop safer substitutes. Unfortunately, this right is far from respected. Improvements are urgently needed."

The complete results of the study will be presented at a conference 'How to eliminate hazardous chemicals from consumer articles' on the 5th of October. Organised by ANEC (the European consumer voice in standardisation), BEUC and the Consumer Council of the Austrian Standards Institute, it will analyse the adequacy of the current European regulatory framework in protecting consumers against exposure to dangerous chemicals.

They are also available on:

<http://docshare.beuc.org/Common/GetFile.asp?ID=41851&mfd=off&LogonName=Guesten>

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ⁱ 2006/1907/CE. Regulation setting up a new system for registration, evaluation, authorization and restrictions of chemicals