

BEUC welcomes adoption of 'nano-definition' but calls for proper regulation of safety risks

BEUC, the European Consumer's Organisation, welcomes the publication of a Commission's recommendation for defining the term 'nano-materials'. Clarity about this term is an important precondition to adopt specific safety requirements in legislation. BEUC is however disappointed that the definition contains two important flaws:

- The threshold for the number of particles which need to be 'nano' in order to make the products a 'nano-product' has been raised from 0,15%¹ to 50%² and deviates in central points from the opinion of the scientific risk assessment committee and a previous Commission's draft³.
- The upper limit of 1-100nm is too narrow and may lead to a situation in which products with bigger nano-particles could escape the definition and thereby remain unregulated.

Nanotechnologies are a range of technologies which use materials on an incredibly small scale: a nanometer relates to a meter like a mouse to the whole earth. Due to their small scale, materials have novel physical and chemical properties compared with normal sized materials and may be hazardous for consumers and the environment. Nano-materials therefore require specific consideration in consumer protection legislation. Despite the fact that more and more consumer products appear on the EU market which claim to contain 'nano' or make use of nanotechnologies such as cosmetics, textiles, detergents and sport equipment, there are doubts with regard to their adequate prior safety assessment.

ENDS

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/emerging/docs/scenihr_o_032.pdf

² http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/nanotech/pdf/commission_recommendation.pdf

³ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/pdf/recommendation_nano.pdf
