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European chemicals safety net flawed Commission study reveals

A European Commission study on hormone disrupting chemicals¹ has shed a worrying new light on the insufficient way these are assessed before use in consumer products.

The main findings of the study:

- Confirm the 'Chemical Cocktail' effect i.e. those chemicals not harmful on their own can cause harm when combined with other substances;
- Stress exposure during critical stages of human development increases risk. Unborn babies and small children are especially vulnerable to developing chronic diseases later in life.
- Criticize international testing methods as inadequate in identifying endocrine disrupting chemicals.

All three conclusions are recklessly bypassed at pre-market testing stage of chemicals and are not safeguarded in existing EU legislation. As a consequence of this evidence, the authorisation and regulation of chemicals in the EU require a complete rethink.

BEUC urges:

- The Commission to review the EU strategy on endocrine disrupting chemicals and effectively reduce consumer exposure to these substances.
- EU legislators to define 'endocrine disrupters' as a distinct type of chemicals and regulate them separately.
- The Danish Presidency to address the danger of the cocktail effect of endocrine disrupting chemicals in the spring Environment Council and ask the Commission to propose ambitious measures to better regulate chemicals in consumer products.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, commented:

"This ground-breaking report confirms we cannot currently rely on international testing methods or EU laws to keep dangerous chemicals out of everyday consumer products. The evidence is on the table now and it calls for swift action to better protect consumers and in particular small children."

ENDS

¹ The study focuses on so-called 'endocrine disrupting chemicals' which are suspected of negatively influencing the human hormonal system and thereby possibly leading to illnesses such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, reduced fertility or damage to the development of the brain among babies.

² Study: 'State of the Art of the Assessment of Endocrine Disrupters' by Professor Dr. Andreas Kortenkamp and team. Contracting entity: Directorate General Environment of the European Commission.
Link: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/endocrine/documents/studies_en.htm