

CONSUMER CHECKLIST

WITHIN REACH: TOXIC-FREE CONSUMER LIVES

Why it matters to consumers

Product tests by consumer groups frequently find harmful and often illegal substances in everyday products, like childcare products or clothes. More than four in five Europeans are concerned about the impact of harmful chemicals on their health and the environment. Strengthening the EU's main chemicals law, REACH is critical to prevent consumer exposure to harmful chemicals, ensure environmental protection, and promote a competitive EU chemical industry. This checklist presents BEUC's recommendations for a stronger, modern REACH that places the needs of people and our planet centre stage.

1

ENABLE FASTER PREVENTIVE ACTION

Consumers are exposed to chemicals released from products daily. REACH does not effectively safeguard consumer against harmful chemicals, in part because inefficient decision-making processes prevent the EU from swiftly reducing exposures.

To increase consumer protection, the EU needs to streamline the REACH risk management processes. This should include reducing the evidence needed to justify preventive action against harmful chemicals. The EU should also set ambitious targets to phase-out carcinogens and endocrine disruptors from all consumer products within a clear timeframe.

2

CLOSE CRITICAL DATA GAPS

REACH generates insufficient information on critical hazard properties (e.g. endocrine disruption) and on chemicals present in consumer goods. These critical data gaps severely hamper public authorities' efforts to prevent consumer exposure to harmful chemicals.

To close these gaps, the EU needs to ensure that the industry provides the necessary information to enable authorities to identify all hazardous chemicals and to prevent their use in consumer goods.

3

ADDRESS CHEMICALS' COCKTAIL EFFECT

Consumers face simultaneous exposure to chemicals from products, food, water, soil, and air, also known as the cocktail effect. REACH largely neglects this combined exposure and as a result risks to human health and the environment may be systematically underestimated.

To address potential combination effects, the industry should take account of combined exposures when placing a chemical on the market, for example via a mixture assessment factor. The EU should also strengthen testing requirements to fully assess the impact of total chemicals exposures and of cumulative effects, corresponding to the reality of consumer exposure.

4

ENHANCE ENFORCEMENT AT THE EU BORDERS AND ONLINE

Companies' compliance with EU chemicals laws remains significantly incomplete. In 2025, more than half of total notifications to the EU Safety Gate system were related to chemical risks. Third-country online marketplaces flood the EU market with low-value products that often breach EU law and endanger consumers and the environment. Discrepancies in Member States' capacities lead to inconsistent controls and inequal enforcement of REACH.

To simplify enforcement efforts and reduce related administration on authorities, all companies should name an economic operator responsible for compliance within the EU. Also, the EU needs to adequately regulate the role of online marketplaces. This should include a possibility to hold online marketplaces liable for non-compliant products sold on their platforms when there is no other EU-based responsible economic operator in the supply chain.

5

REINFORCE CONSUMERS' RIGHT TO KNOW

Consumers often lack information about chemicals in the products they buy. REACH grants consumers the right to know whether products contain substances of very high concern (SVHC). Yet they often experience that companies provide incomplete or even no answers to their requests for information, in part because companies rarely have sufficient knowledge of their obligations.

To enable informed choices, the EU needs to reinforce consumers' right to know. Companies should always have to respond to a consumer request for information regardless of whether a product contains a SVHC or not. Increased transparency about SVHCs in consumer goods will enhance incentives for industry to phase out the use of these substances.