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Consumers let down by decision on hormone disrupting chemicals

Technical experts from EU Member States today [agreed to a controversial European Commission proposal](#) on how to define endocrine disruptors.

Endocrine disruptors are chemicals that disrupt the hormone system and are linked to severe human health problems, such as cancers or infertility. Suspected endocrine disruptors are found in many everyday consumer products, for example toys or cosmetics.

Today's agreement comes after several years of intense lobbying and heated debate during which civil society organisations, governments and EU institutions were unable to reach a common understanding.

[Scientists](#), [Members of the EU Parliament](#), [Member States](#), [companies](#) and civil society organisations including [BEUC](#) have repeatedly criticised the Commission's proposed definition as overly restrictive and consequently unfit to ensure adequate protection of human health and the environment.

Monique Goyens, Director General of The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), commented:

"We regret that a majority of Member State experts have agreed to the Commission's flawed proposal."

"The Commission's approach contradicts the precautionary principle, namely that protective action should prevail in the face of scientific uncertainty. With this definition, the EU would turn a blind eye to many chemicals which scientists single out for their potential to disrupt our hormone system. Turning a blind eye however does not make these chemicals go away. This definition would hamper the EU's ability to effectively protect its citizens and the environment against endocrine disruptors.

"Sadly, business interests seem to prevail over taking sensible measures which would prevent possible harm from happening in the future. The guiding principles in these discussions must be to protect consumers and the environment, not the interests of businesses."

"On the bright side, the European Parliament and EU ministers can still send this proposal back to the drawing board. We urge them to do so. "

Note

The EU Commission has a legal obligation to adopt criteria for defining endocrine disruptors to ensure their effective regulation.

To BEUC, an EU definition of endocrine disruptors needs to capture all chemicals that may disrupt the hormonal system; that is, both those chemicals we know are endocrine disruptors and those we suspect are endocrine disruptors. BEUC urges the Parliament and Council to only adopt criteria that:

- require a reasonable burden of proof and respect the precautionary principle;
- introduce multiple classification categories according to the available level of evidence, *i.e.* known, presumed and suspected endocrine disruptors. This is already the case for chemicals that cause cancer, change DNA or are toxic to reproduction;
- are applicable to all relevant laws protecting EU citizens and the environment ranging from pesticides to cosmetics and toys.