

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



DIRECTORATE GENERAL - INTERNAL POLICIES

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

NOTICE to MEMBERS

Oral Question no. 2007/18 by Mr Jens Holm

Pursuant to Rule 187 of the Rules of Procedure, please find below an oral question to the Commission.

Subject: The inclusion of environmental regards in the future revision of Council Directive 76/768/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to cosmetic products

When will the European Commission present its proposal for a revision of the Cosmetics Directive? Does the European Commission have the intention to include environmental regards in its revised proposal? If the European Commission does not have such intentions, what are its reasons?

Numerous studies have shown that hygienic and cosmetic products released to the market contain environmental damaging substances. A study from the Nordic Council of Ministers reveals that siloxanes which belong to a group of substances widely used in personal care and cosmetic products and are categorised as very toxic for water living organisms frequently appear in wastewater.

Synthetic musks are being used by the fragrance industry in a wide range of consumer products due to their particular scent properties. According to the OSPAR background document on musk xylene and other musks from 2004, musk xylene is considered a PBT substance and it concludes that: "Although there is a need to await the collection of further relevant information before finalizing conclusion on the choice for actions, the following actions are already thought to be justified: to promote the substitution of musk xylene with substitutes with a more favorable environmental profile..."

Lately, another study showed that different organic UV filters (4-MBC, octyl-methoxycinnamate and benzofenon) may be environmentally damaging resulting in a decision by the Danish authorities to withdraw these substances from the market.

The European Commission is working on a revision of the Cosmetics Directive 76/768/EEC with the intention to simplify and strengthen certain elements related to chemical safety in this field. Currently the Cosmetics Directive only regulates the safety aspects of the products for consumers but not the protection of the environment. However, due to the number of examples showing that environmental assessment is necessary for individual ingredients in hygienic and cosmetic products it is crucial that the future legislation include environmental regards. Under the new chemical legislation, REACH, substances intended for use in cosmetics products are excluded from Title IV "Information in the Supply Chain" and Title VII "Restrictions". This means that substances in cosmetic products do not have to be accompanied with a safety data sheet leading to that retailer and consumers will not have access to information about possible environmental risks. In other words these actors will have difficulties in making informed choices and there will be less incentives for the manufactures to substitute it with a less harmful alternative.

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