# Chemicals: classification, labelling, packaging, adaptation to the REACH Regulation (amend. Directive 67/548/EEC)

2003/0257(COD) - 10/11/2003

The Council took note of Commissioner Liikanen's presentation of the legislative proposal for a Regulation on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals (REACH) and instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to examine the proposal as a matter of priority as soon as it has been transmitted. The objective of the REACH proposal is to improve the protection of human health and the environment against chemical hazards while ensuring the proper functioning of the internal market and maintaining the competitiveness of the chemicals industry. The following main issues emerged from the Council's debate which followed the presentation of this legislative proposal: - a large majority of delegations welcomed the amendments introduced by the Commission in its final proposal which takes into account some of the concerns expressed by different sectors consulted, primarily as regards the scope of the REACH system and the associated costs for industry; - sharing the need for a balanced approach taking into account competitiveness, environmental and health aspects as equally important, delegations welcomed the decision taken by the Permanent Representatives Committee to set up an ad hoc Working Party on Chemicals with a broad mandate to examine the proposal in all its aspects; - during the debate, the Commission underlined that it had presented an impact assessment of costs for industry. Many delegations stressed the importance of such comprehensive impact assessment, in particular as regards SME's and other users of chemicals; - some delegations were of the opinion that indirect costs resulting from the application of the REACH system would still be considerable and had to be examined carefully; and - several delegations underlined the role to be played by the proposed Chemicals Agency in coordinating the evaluation procedure and thus ensuring that there are no distortions in the application of the rules. It is recalled that the last European Council (16/17 October) indicated in its conclusions that "European Union legislation should not be a handicap to EU competitiveness compared to that of other major economic areas. To this end the Commission is invited to take into account the consequences of proposed EU legislation on enterprises through providing a comprehensive impact assessment. The forthcoming proposal on chemicals, which will be examined by the Competitiveness Council in coordination with other Council configurations, will be the first case for implementing this approach, taking in particular into account its effects on SMEs.