Environment and human health: impact of polyvinyl chloride PVC. Green paper

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The committee adopted the report by Guido SACCONI (PES, I) on the Green Paper in which it called for the "polluter pays" principle to apply to PVC waste so that PVC producers were charged for any additional costs generated by the presence of PVC in waste (such as the need for better filter equipment, costs caused by corrosion, etc.). Because of the problems PVC caused during incineration, the committee wanted the Commission to bring forward legislation requiring separate waste collection of PVC products. The report also called for research in the field of incineration to include ways of recovering harmful hydrogen chloride. Hard and soft PVC, it said, should be separated, with hard PVC being landfilled because of its high chlorine content and soft PVC being incinerated as otherwise there was a risk that phthalates would be released. The committee regarded the undertakings given by the PVC industry as regards the use of toxic additives in PVC as insufficient and therefore wanted Community legislation to phase out cadmium and lead-based stabilisers and to ban imports of them from third countries. On the subject of phthalates, which were often used as plasticisers (for manufacturing flexible PVC products) but were suspected of mimicking hormones and causing fertility problems, the committee wanted the Commission to examine alternatives and establish targets to reduce their use, particularly in medical equipment. The committee regretted that the Commission had not carried out any lifecycle analysis of PVC products and alternative products and said this could be a field for research within the Sixth Framework Research Programme. It called on the Commission to bring forward a long-term horizontal strategy involving the introduction of substitution policies. The committee wanted the percentage of PVC waste which was recycled to be increased and called for research in the area of chemical recycling. It suggested a recycling model on the basis of the end-of-life vehicles directive. It also proposed the introduction of compulsory marking so that PVC could be distinguished more easily from other plastic waste to facilitate recycling. However, it believed legislation should only be adopted if precise objectives for the recovery of waste could not be met through voluntary commitments by industry.