Registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals (REACH); European Chemicals Agency

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The Council held a policy debate on the state of play regarding the draft Regulation concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), establishing a European Chemicals Agency. The debate ranged over a whole series of issues such as the role of the Agency in the evaluation of dossiers and substances – particularly as regards cooperation between the Agency and the Member States – and the conclusions to be drawn from the work on the REACH impact analyses.

The Council reiterated its intention to take forward the REACH proposal with a view to reaching a political agreement following on from the European Parliament's opinion.

As for the evaluation of dossiers, debate within the Council confirmed the broadly positive attitude to the enhanced role of the Agency but reiterated the importance of retaining national capability to respond to challenges and of retaining capability to evaluate substances likely to constitute a risk to health and/or the environment. In this context, the Council calls on its preparatory bodies to consider the possible consequences of the alternative proposals with the same rigour as that applied to the analysis of the Commission proposal – also in terms of Community resources required to implement them.

As regards the outcome of the REACH workshop, organised by the Luxembourg Presidency, the Council considers that the impact studies conducted hitherto have produced sufficient knowledge to enable negotiations to continue on the basis of the Commission proposal with a view to producing a feasible system.

The Council calls on its preparatory bodies to continue their negotiations on all aspects of the Commission proposal while taking due account of the impact of the new legislation on SMEs, on producers/importers of low-volume substances and on the international competitiveness of European industry.

Lastly, the Council is determined to take account of all the results obtained from impact studies when it takes a political decision.